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THE JOY OF YOUTH



EDEN PHILLPOTTS

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THE JOY OF YOUTH

THE JOY OF YOUTH

BY

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

Author of
"Widecombe Fair," "Children of the Mist,"
"The American Prisoner," Etc.

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
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THE JOY OF YOUTH

A COMEDY

CHAPTER I

THE APOLLO OF TENEA

THOSE who have descended into the cast room at the British Museum will be aware that copies of the world's masterpieces are there huddled together and displayed to very inadequate advantage. Space is lacking, and the juxtaposition of the pieces is such that they often rob each other of their finest attributes.

On a day in autumn it happened that a young man stepped backwards in the cast room to obtain a better view of the Apollo of Tenea. The result of his action was disastrous, for he collided heavily with a girl behind him and nearly brought her to the ground.

He flushed, bowed, and made abject apology; she treated the incident lightly, and took it in good part. He was a clean-shorn, athletic youth of six-and-twenty, with a clear, broad forehead, dark hair, and keen grey eyes; she was four years younger, and displayed unusual beauty and distinction of carriage. Her hair was of a light gold, and her eyes were brown. She was tall and rather slight, but straight and strong. Her mouth was beautiful, and her expres-

sion intelligent, inquiring, and laughter-loving. She laughed now at his embarrassment.

"Ten thousand apologies," he said. "I'm so sorry — clumsy fool."

"Not your fault. There's no room to turn round here."

"Exactly! You feel that too? It's like a Campo Santo, or some such place — where they bury the dead in one another's laps — so stuffy for them. A sin and a shame to stick all these things elbow to elbow. Don't you think so?"

She responded without the least self-consciousness and rubbed her arm.

"So it is — not to be able to get six feet away from the Nike!"

"Ah! you've found that out? Your arm's hurting. What a wretch I am, and — forgive me, your hat's just a thought too much to the left."

Active emotions were running in the hidden veins of this pair. The boy was an artist; the girl lived in the country, but vaguely hungered for all that art meant and felt affinity with it. The instinct of the creator belonged to her — not as a conquering fire, but as a pleasant and abiding addition. She told herself sometimes that she, too, might have made things had her lot fallen among the makers. She was well born and accustomed to a society of conventional sort; but her soul was unconventional, and she hailed this meeting gladly, as a scrap of salt to uneventful days.

"Thank you," she answered; then she looked at him without concealing her interest. "You're an artist, I expect?"

He saw that she was a lady, and felt mildly surprised that she should have any more to say. He was also gratified, for exceedingly he admired her. But she little guessed the amazing frankness of the personality she had thus challenged.

"Yes, I'm an artist — any fool can see that. My eyes and my hands told you, no doubt."

The other began to wish herself away. But she was amused.

"I love art," she said.

"Do you? I love apricot jam, and a girl, and several other things — not art. That's too big a business for love. Art's my life."

"Well, you can love your life," she said quickly.

"Good!" he answered. "You're right and I'm wrong. You can love art — in the same large sense that you can love your life or your religion — if you've got one."

"I'm an artist myself," she deliberately declared; but he regarded her doubtfully.

"You hardly fill the bill — too much the very, very latest thing in clothes. What do you make?"

"Drawings in water-colours and short stories. I sold one for three pounds once."

"A picture, or a short story?"

"A short story."

"They're fearfully difficult, I believe. Probably it wasn't a short story at all. Only you and your editor fondly thought it was."

"That's rude," she said.

"Not really — you see, a short story is so rare, and — you're so young and beautiful. No, you're not an artist. I don't see the signs — none of the

pale cast of thought about you. If you were to look very closely at my forehead you'd find incipient lines there — just the first gossamers of that spider of intellect who always spins a pattern on the shop-front of the brain — to show what's doing inside. Now, the interest you take in me —"

She gasped.

"Good gracious! I don't take the least!"

"Yes, you do — I happen to know it — not egotism on my part, but intuition. I feel enormous interest in you, so, of course, you feel enormous interest in me."

"It doesn't follow at all," she said, preparing to fly.

"We are both rather fine things physically," he declared. "There are some ripping lines about you, and the latest fashion can't kill them, though it tries to; and as for me, I'm in the style of the Canon of Lysippus — only not so massive."

They were passing a cast of the Canon at the time.

"I got my 'blue' at Cambridge," he said.

"My brother got his at Oxford," she answered, looking for the exit.

"Don't go yet. You're the very sort of girl who would have a brother who was a 'blue.'"

"What did you get yours for?" she asked, still hesitating.

"The Sprint."

"Did you win?"

"Now you fail of tact," he said. "No, I didn't win. Just before the race, the Oxford man went to the photographer and said to him, 'Stand here, please, and photograph me as I break the tape.' It

was too much for my nerves. He smothered me. He was a very great runner, and is at the Bar, I believe, now. That man must be a success at the Bar, don't you think? Rather a bounder, all the same."

"Was he called Merton?" she asked.

"He was."

"Then he's my brother!"

"Oh my! Now you'll go away!"

But the girl was not annoyed. Her desire to fly had apparently vanished.

"He is rather a bounder. He's doing great things at the Indian Bar," she said.

"You *are* large-minded," he declared. "How can I reward you and prove that I'm forgiven?"

She looked round to note that they had the gallery of casts to themselves. Only a caretaker sat at the entrance. His head drooped, and he regarded an omphalic button on his waistcoat which had hypnotised him into a slumberous state.

"Tell me about the statues — if you know," she said, greatly daring.

"I will, Miss Merton — proud to."

"I was studying the Venuses."

"Casts never give the expression. Here's a Roman copy of the Cnidian Aphrodite — without her tin petticoat from the Vatican, thank God. That head never did belong to her really; but it's a beautiful head, though rather fleshy. I like the Munich copy, too; that one kept her head, at any rate."

"Which is Venus Victrix?"

"Here she is — from Naples — a good cast. She makes the Venus of Arles look homely. It is as though an aristocrat and her lady's maid had un-

dressed together. Here's the Aphrodite of Melos — of course, you know that. Somehow the lighting makes the expression wrong. She looks sulky. But she doesn't at the Louvre."

"I like the Cnidian best," declared his companion.

"But Praxiteles comes off badly in the cast," he answered. "His subtlety and texture are lost. His technique can't be copied in clay. Have you been to Rome?"

"No."

"Well, believe me, there's a gulf fixed between even the copies of him there and these casts of the copies. Take the Marble Faun — the inhuman fascination of it, the feeling that you are looking at a creature quite above good and evil, or kindness and cruelty — just a creature from another world than ours — that's utterly lost here. This is merely dull."

"Now I want to see the Esquiline Venus," she said, and he took her to it.

"What d'you think of her?" he asked, with his eyes on the statue.

"She's a darling."

"Well done, you! So she is a darling; and so's Botticelli's Venus a darling, and so's Venus Urania at Florence a darling. D'you know why? Because they are not Aphrodite at all; they are just portraits of delicious women. You don't call Venus Victrix a darling, or the Venus of Melos. You call them goddesses. But this girl from Rome — you feel she could make a man happy. I swear she could make me. She's a cosy thing. I know somebody jolly like her, as a matter of fact. She's got a dear little

face at the Palatine; but this cast rather wrecks that."

"Not a Venus at all, then?"

"Not she — a portrait — close — precious — intimate and human. You are rather like Botticelli's Venus yourself, by the way — only statelier. Look at the Corritrice over there in her little vest. That's a copy of a bronze from the fifth century — ages older than t'other girl, and finer really; but a portrait, too."

"What d'you understand by Ruler Art?" she asked suddenly.

"Ha — ha! You've been reading Ludovici, or Nietzsche, or both. Ruler Art interprets the past and present in terms of the future."

The girl had time to wonder to herself before answering. This man already seemed to her a familiar incident of life. She felt absolutely at home in his company.

"That sounds all right," she said calmly. "But I wonder if there is anything in it?"

It was his turn to start.

"By Jove! You're jolly interesting," he answered. "Who ever would have thought — just passing through London — that I should have had such a bit of luck as you!"

"Don't waste time. I must go very soon," she replied. "Come to the Apollo of Tenea again, please. I was humbly trying to understand about it when you — If I were a real modern, I ought to like it better than all these Greek splendours; but I don't."

"More don't I," he answered. "And there's not the least reason why you should. They say it's not

archaic, you know; they declare that it's the expression of a marvellous instinct for a new and sublime pattern of the *genus homo* — an inspiration that leaves poor, panting Nature hopelessly in the rear."

"Men might come to it — if they took to wearing stays," she declared, flippantly.

"Never mind his poor, hour-glass body. Consider his face. Now master those eyes and that mouth. That's archaic, I tell you — if every expert in the world said it wasn't; and if you doubt, then look at this. Here's the 'Hermes carrying a calf,' from the Acropolis — the same face — the very same! A human lifetime — seventy years — separates the works. The Apollo was by a late sixth-century artist; the Hermes came into the world three-score and ten years earlier. Nobody will deny the archaicism of the first, and, allowing for the ordinary passage of evolution, the second springs quite naturally out of it. Of course, they are nearer Egypt than Greece — very beautiful and Ruler Art without a question; but turn now to the Lysippus, and you'll see that the Greeks were quite as great idealists as this sixth-century B. C. chap. Only the Greek idealises *inside* Nature, and the Apollo artist idealises *outside*. At least, that's what his friends say he does. A Philistine might think that he didn't know enough and wasn't idealising at all, but merely trying to imitate a human being without the necessary power. Anyway, to tell me that this conception is more glorious than the idealisation of the Greek — it's bosh! The Greeks never created a principle out of a falsehood. Lysippus and Phidias show what Nature might do if she were as great an artist as they; but the man

who made this Apollo is teaching his grandmother, Nature, to suck eggs. She can beat him without trying; and what sort of art must that be that Nature can beat? No, the great ones give lordship and authority and divinity to human eyes and hands and feet. That's what Egypt never did, or tried to do."

She gazed whimsically at him, and her expression fired him to personalities.

"Take yourself, Miss Merton, what would a Greek have made of you? He would have seen a fine head — spoiled for the moment by a perfectly grotesque head-covering, like a kitchen utensil; but still very beautiful, and set on a pretty neck and lifted above good shoulders. Then a bust, neat but not gaudy, as the devil said, and breasts set low —"

"Good heavens! Do people talk like this?" she asked.

"Not often in England," he admitted. "But I'm not often in England. I'll stop if it disagrees with you."

"In a perfect stranger it may be possible," she conceded. "Of course, if I knew you, it would be unthinkable."

He laughed at that.

"Doesn't your betrothed talk to you like this?"

"How d'you know I've got a betrothed?"

He pointed to her hand. She wore gloves, but a ring was visible through the kid.

"No," she declared. "He does not." Then she laughed to herself.

The other began talking again.

"So remember, Miss Merton, that evolution makes a perfectly natural, though modest and trifling, stride

from the Hermes to the Apollo; and then by many a toilsome step upward to Lysippus. There is a convention outside Nature that, speaking generally, means Egypt — a convention that always stuck in the Nile mud and never got any forwarder for sufficient reasons; but the *real* thing keeps inside Nature. Only it's much easier outside — so many of the little great painters of to-day are keeping outside. Come and have a bun and a glass of milk."

"What a feeble offer!" she said.

"I saw you were a country girl, and thought you would feel on familiar ground."

"Does this frock look as though it had come from the country?" she asked.

"No — the frock would be up to any devilries; but the person in it — You won't come, then? Doesn't that show you're a country girl?"

"I certainly won't come, and I'd a million times sooner be a country girl than a town one."

"Quite right; quite right. You wouldn't glow — like a ripe filbert nut — and have such a flash in your amber eyes if you lived in London. May I see you to the gate?"

"No — only to the steps."

"I'll show you a thing outside that will interest you — more Ruler Art."

"Outside?"

"Yes — bang outside in the rain and cold — here it is — an idol or something — New Zealand Ruler Art from Easter Island. I like it better than the Apollo of Tenea — it's grander. Don't you think so?"

"You ought to have been a schoolmaster," she said, inconsequently.

"Thank God — no necessity. I'm a creator; and I'm rich."

"So am I," she declared. "How funny that two rich people should meet like this and both really care for art!"

"And how horribly sad that they are never going to meet again."

She looked at him.

"Where do you live?" she asked.

"Where could an artist live? At Firenze, of course."

"You're a painter, I expect."

"I am."

"I live in Devonshire," she said.

"And will marry a Devonshire man?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Oh, in a year or two."

"Have you ever been in Firenze?"

"Never; but I've often hungered fearfully to go."

"Well, go. Take him. I don't mean for the honeymoon; but now — this autumn."

She laughed.

"He's a sportsman. He would rather shoot a woodcock than see the loveliest picture in the world."

"And yet you call yourself an artist. You ridiculous girl!"

"Can't an artist marry a sportsman?" she asked.

"No," he answered decidedly. "It wouldn't be

marriage; it would be suicide. Don't you bother any more about art. Extinguish it. Learn about killing things; not about making them. What part of Devonshire d'you come from?"

"Near Chudleigh, in South Devon."

"The deuce you do!"

"You know it?"

"Not I; but I've got an aunt — an old Elizabethan sort of aunt, who lives in an Elizabethan sort of house on the edge of the wilderness of Haldon."

"Good gracious! Then you're Bertram Dangerfield?"

"Hurrah! — then you can come and have lunch?"

"Most certainly I can't," she said. "Why, Lady Dangerfield — she has never a good word for you. But she's most refreshing — quite a tonic in our dull, out-of-the-world corner."

"She's lived. When are you going home?"

"Next week."

"Go and see her — and you'll be surprised; but don't say you know me, or the cat will be out of the bag."

"I *don't* know you, and I don't think I want to know you," she declared.

He smiled and took off his hat.

"I'm going back now to study Crocodile Art," he said. "There are very magnificent things in Crocodile Art, you know. Bound to be in a nation that made its beasts into personifications of its gods. Why not come back after your bun and your glass of milk?"

"I'm engaged this afternoon."

"To-morrow, then?"

"No — quite impossible."

"I'd tell you all about the Sekhets, and show you the most weird and wonderful of them. Great cats with women looking out of their faces — especially that terrible one dedicated to the goddess Sekhet, 'Crusher of Hearts,' by Amen-Hetep the Third. From Karnak she came — a grim, relentless, awfully wise thing — far, far more than a black porphyry lioness-head set on human shoulders. She smiles at the life and death of man. She wears the sun and holds the symbol of life. Full face she's a lioness — side face, she's a human hag from eld, who hides fearful secrets behind her inscrutable eyes and lipless mouth. She tells you that it is not woman's beauty, but woman's serpent wisdom that crushes the hearts of men. Then we'd compare the Greek animals and show how and why they are so tame and trivial contrasted with the Egyptian. We'd work out the reason for that, and have a tremendous time."

Her heart quickened, and she answered truly:

"I should love it, but I'm engaged every minute until I go home."

"Good-bye, then, and thank you; you've taught me a precious thing."

"I taught you?"

"Not didactically — not deliberately. I mean the way your mouth curves when you are puzzled — heavenly! You ought always to be puzzled. By the way, your direction? I don't ask for curiosity, but because there are some points that must be cleared for you if you want art to be a real thing in your life."

"I'm not sure that there is room."

"Let me help you to make room," he said very earnestly. "Don't let life crowd it out. There's nothing wears like art."

She hesitated, then granted his request; whereupon he returned to the Museum, while she, feeling hungry, actually sought the fare he had proposed. And as she ate and drank, the girl was filled with a nervous emotion that he might reappear and find her.

She thought about the painter and summed him up.

"Young, horribly proud, good voice, thinks nothing in the world matters but art — jolly to look at — keen — strong — not much soul — egotistical. Might be cruel, or might be kind. Probably both. His eyes are lightning quick — of course, that's his trade. I wonder if he can paint, or only talk about painting?"

Another thought struck her.

"How Ralegh would hate him — and yet he's not really a hateable man. Perhaps they'd do each other good. No, they wouldn't. They're too dreadfully different."

CHAPTER II

OF THE LOVERS

LOVEDAY MERTON was an orphan, and lived with her mother's brother. Her own brother laboured in India, but his wife and infant dwelt at home. To them she sometimes went, but not when Foster Merton was in England. The brother and sister did not suit one another temperamentally, and he regarded Loveday as a girl of weak will and uncertain purpose. Her beauty he could not deny, and since, from the barrister's standpoint, it was her sole asset, he felt some satisfaction when to India came the news that she was engaged to be married and had made a very satisfactory match.

Sir Ralegh Vane was the fifth baronet, a man of thirty, strong in opinions, established in his values, sensible of his obligations, and a supporter staunch of the old order and all pertaining thereto. He had looked upon Loveday, and fallen to her perfections and vivacity. The vivacity indeed gave him pause sometimes; but he pardoned it in a girl of two-and-twenty. It was proper at that age, and a certain disinclination to take herself seriously, Sir Ralegh declared to be a charm that sat not ill on her youth. That it would vanish after marriage he was assured. He designed to wed when Loveday was four-and-twenty; because in his opinion that was the psychological moment for an Englishwoman to take a hus-

band. The man's age was not so important. He would like to have been thirty to her twenty-four; but the fact that he must be thirty-two did not seriously trouble him. She had a thousand a year; would have more; and was well connected. In addition to her personal charm, she possessed talent. She could play the piano and talk German and French reasonably well; she was fond of literature, and displayed a trifling gift for painting. All Sir Ralegh's friends praised her water-colour drawings, and said that they ought to be exhibited. Of art he knew nothing, but recognised the existence of it, and granted it a place among minor human interests. As a broad-minded man he could not do less; and as one who believed himself concerned with the things that matter, he felt that he must not be asked to do more. Art might be very well in its place; but naturally its place was not Vanestowe, the seat of his family.

In a dell of beauty under Haldon's western facing downs, the first Vane to distinguish himself had lifted a red brick mansion and decorated it with white stone. Four square, enormous, uncompromising, emblematical of the clan, it stood, and round about, thanks to the third baronet, who by good chance had loved horticulture, a rare garth now spread, enriched by the natural features of the estate. First rolled forest lands along the hills, climbing by narrow coombs to the ragged heaths that crowned them; then an undergrowth of azalea and rhododendron ran like a fire in spring along the fringes of the woods; while lower yet, after some acres of sloping meadow, where the pheasant coops stood in summer, began the gardens proper. Here were a collection of

Indian rhododendrons, the finest in Devonshire; a dell of many waterfalls, famed for its ferns and American plants; a Dutch garden; a rose garden; an Italian garden, with some fine lead statues and a historic cistern or two; and a lily pond of half an acre fed by the Rattle-brook, a Haldon tributary of Teign. Then came the mighty walled garden of ten acres, the orchard houses, the palm house, and the conservatory — a little palace of glass that rose beside the dwelling and was entered from the great drawing-room. Twenty-five farms were spread over the estate, and a hundred and fifty humble families revolved about it. Sir Ralegh was a generous landlord; he gave liberally but exacted payment in respect and reverence. These he demanded, not from vanity, but principle. He held himself as a natural bulwark and fortification of the State. He had been born to his position and educated for it. Generations had contributed to model his mind and throw dust in his eyes as to the real issues of life and the trend of human affairs. Yet he strove to be large-minded, and often succeeded. Justice was his watchword — the justice of a Justice of the Peace. He was a clean liver, honourable, highly sensitive, and absurdly sentimental under his skin. His mother still lived and kept house for him. He loved her dearly, and believed her to be a woman of exceptional insight and brilliancy. But she was far narrower than he, and imbued with a class prejudice which she concealed from him. She saw deeper into the coming social changes than her son, hated them, and used her little mop secretly to stem the tide as much as possible.

To Sir Ralegh Vane was Loveday plighted, and her affection greatly gladdened his days. He made a stately lover, and she found herself quite prepared to take most of the problems of life at his valuation. She felt very kindly to the poor, and lost no opportunity of being useful to them. To be anything but a Conservative in politics, and deplore the maladministration of the Government, when her side was out of office, had not occurred to her. It was in the air she breathed at Vanestowe, and at her own home, distant half a mile from her lover's. She accepted Sir Ralegh's opinions on every subject that did not interest her; indeed, only in the particulars of art and horticulture did she rebel. He slighted art, and by a sort of instinct, she resented that attitude. The more he urged her to keep painting and literature in their just subordination to the larger issues of politics and religion, and the studies in economics proper for his future wife, the more she found that art must occupy a large portion of her existence if she were to be healthy-minded and happy. But she kept these convictions much to herself for there was none to sympathise, none to advise, none to prescribe an occasional change of mental air, none to feel that the atmosphere of Vanestowe and the surrounding country required clarification and a breath from without.

To Sir Ralegh art was make-believe and no more — a decoration of life, a veneer — and of doubtful significance at that; while his betrothed, at rebellious moments when her days seemed more stuffy than usual, was tempted to feel that not art but politics, morals, religion, and all the interrelations of country life were make-believe — a mere filmy tissue of

unreality, against which art and the beauty of natural things stood as sweet and ordered and lovely as a rainbow against dark clouds. The need for contrast and change existed as a vital demand of her life, and she began to know it. There is no hunger like the hunger for art, and Loveday was a good deal starved in this sort. Kindred spirits dwelt in the county, but she knew them not. No machinery existed in the neighbourhood to bring fellow-feelers together; no free-masonry to discover other art-lovers was known to Loveday; she possessed no divining rod to twitch and point when she found herself amid unknown men and women at balls or dinners, at garden-parties, or those cathedral functions to which Exeter occasionally called Sir Ralegh and his friends. Therefore she imagined herself a phœnix, and was sorry for her forlorn distinction.

Her future mother-in-law doubted these aspirations, but told her friends that the girl's vague yearnings would soon vanish after marriage. She did not like Loveday very much, for she discerned a grave fault in her. Lady Vane took her class too seriously, all other classes not seriously enough; but Loveday never committed this error. She had a sense of humour that Sir Ralegh's mother viewed from the first with suspicion. Lady Vane held that it was better for women to follow the rule and have no humour than be the exceptions to that rule. To be an exception to any rule is in itself dangerous. The portentous night of Lady Vane's gravity was seldom lifted into any dawn of laughter. Indeed, she held that there was little now to laugh at in life, granted that you had a heart and felt intelligently

for the gathering sorrows of the Upper Ten Thousand. The levity that Loveday assumed, rather as a shield than a garment, caused Lady Vane uneasiness. She argued with her son about it, directed him to inspire his betrothed with more distinguished opinions; doubted when he assured her that Loveday's laughter was beautiful to him.

"Let her laugh now," he said. "You used to laugh when you were her age, mother."

"But not at the same things, Ralegh. She laughs at things which not merely should she not laugh at: she oughtn't even to see them. Her extraordinary affection for Fry is in itself a little — well, stupid. There's a lack of perspective."

Fry was the head-gardener at Vanestowe, and Loveday found his outlook on life a ceaseless delight.

"Fry is rather a joy," confessed Sir Ralegh. "His ideas are wildly unconstitutional and ridiculous; but he's never vulgar, like the Board School taught people."

"'Vulgar'! No. Vulgarity at Vanestowe! We have not sunk to that. Vulgarity to me is spiritual death. Fry isn't vulgar; but he's apt to be coarse. I don't blame him: his work on its grosser side must breed coarseness; but Loveday is all too prone to show indifference before physical facts, such as the needful enriching of the soil and so forth. I would rather see a natural shrinking from everything common and unclean. At her age I only sought the garden to cull flowers, not to dig, like a gardener's boy."

"Better that she should garden than go in for

feminine politics. Better that all girls should hunt and shoot and fish than distort their outlook with all this modern trash and poison. There seems to be no alternative with a woman between mental toil and physical," he said.

"Women never seem to do anything by halves nowadays," mourned his mother. "In my youth it was such bad form to be so definite."

Here, then, was the atmosphere in which young Loveday dwelt and the man to whom she had given her most heartfelt, most cordial, most enthusiastic affection. A gentle home she had, cast among gentle people; and they were all content with their environment and desired its continuation; while she, from time to time, felt a call to escape for her soul's sake. She knew that as she grew older the need for these excursions and escapes would assuredly not lessen; and once she wondered whether the circumstances would be such that her husband would share these periodical migrations, or whether he would not. After they had been engaged for six months she discovered that he would not.

She loved him well, and he loved her devotedly; but his love would never make him take her round the world, or change his own conviction that his duties must keep him at the helm of his affairs. From time to time he sat on the Grand Jury at the Exeter Assizes; from time to time he attended shooting-parties; and that was the extent of his adventures from home. He had been to Eton and Oxford. He had subsequently filled the position of private secretary to a Cabinet Minister for six months. But by his father's sudden death his career

was changed in youth. He inherited; accepted life as it presented itself to him; administered his little world to the best of his powers and convictions.

Loveday counted the hours to her lover's kiss, and she guessed that he would be at Chudleigh to meet her train. Instead, he planned a surprise, and welcomed her at Exeter, that he might drive her home from there. After London, Sir Ralegh always came to Loveday like the scent of lavender and the breath of far-off things. His pale blue eyes were rather sad, and chance imparted to them an expression of thoughtfulness which was accidental rather than real. They had a supercilious expression, which libelled him, and they looked down the sides of his high, aquiline nose. He was very tall, large-boned, and of a florid, fresh complexion. He wore his straw-coloured hair parted in the middle, and his straw-coloured moustache described an imposing curve, so that the points of it almost met under his chin. He also permitted a little, old-fashioned patch of whisker to grow forward of his ear. Loveday hated these decorations, had once slighted them and begged him to make a sacrifice; but he pleaded with her for them successfully.

"My father wore whiskers, and my mother likes them; perhaps some day — after she has gone —"

Whereupon, of course, his lady declared that under no circumstances must they ever be mowed down.

Sir Ralegh moved slowly with a long stride, spoke slowly, and thought slowly. Indeed, there was very little to think about, for his life moved like a machine. He had a good factor and two assistants.

They respected him deeply, and were always grumbling at him among themselves, because he sided with the tenants — a fact the tenants actually appreciated. This course, however, played its part in postponing the evil hour, and as Walter Ross, the bailiff, was now a man of five-and-fifty, his theories of ideal perfection in a steward had long since perished under the strain of practical politics. He meant to retire before ten years were past, and hoped to be dead ere the revolution came.

In a somewhat violent tweed suit, Sir Ralegh solemnly jolted up and down the arrival platform at Exeter Station, consulted his watch, and presently told a station inspector that the train was five minutes late. The official made no attempt to contradict him, and an announcement, that the sycophant had doubtless received with silent contempt from a lesser man, was humbly confirmed and regretted.

"I don't know what has come over the Torquay express, Sir Ralegh," said the inspector. "This is the third day — ah! she's signalled. You won't have to wait any time now, sir."

Then came Loveday, and a footman appeared for her parcels and her portmanteaux.

They were seated in a big Napier five minutes later, and, having cleared the city, Sir Ralegh kissed Loveday on the mouth, pinched her ear, and asked her if she was glad to see him. She assured him that she was, and he talked of foxes.

"The best news I've had for many a long day comes from Haldon," he told her. "Three litter within three miles! It's good to feel, though the

world's such a difficult place and puts such ceaseless pressure on a conscientious man, that cub-hunting begins in a month."

"Hurrah!" said Loveday.

CHAPTER III

LUNCH AT VANESTOWE

THREE days after her return home there was a little luncheon at her lover's, and Loveday came to it. She arrived on her bicycle, an hour early, and Sir Ralegh met her at the outer gate and walked with her through the woods. Pheasants cried round about them, and the baronet declared that he had seldom known such a successful year.

"The spring was just right and the birds came on wonderfully and never had a throw back," he declared. "There'll be too much leaf at the beginning of October, and I shan't shoot much before the big parties. Partridges are extraordinarily wild. It's a bore; I'm not shooting any too well this year."

"Perhaps you're a bit stale," she said, but he could not flatter himself it was so. He went into the possible reasons for his bad form at great length, while she listened and nodded and walked with her arm in his. Knowing that she loved them, he took her into an orchard house, where yellow figs grew, and watched her while she ate.

"Who are coming to luncheon?" she asked.

"Only the Misses Neill-Savage and Nina Spedding and her brother, and you and your uncle."

Loveday made a face.

"I hate the Neill-Savages."

"They play for their own hand a bit, I admit; but they're sound, and nowadays merely to be sound is something. We shall soon have our backs to the wall; but united we may stand a little longer."

"In politics and religion?"

"Another fig?"

"No; but they are lovely. Come into the potting-sheds. Has Fry got his autumn bulbs yet? I love to see them and touch them before they go into the ground."

Sir Ralegh laughed.

"What a gardener you are. I believe when you come to live here, you'll want everything turned upside down."

"Not I — everything is far too lovely and perfect. I adore things just as they are, and wouldn't alter a flower bed. You know that well enough. But I shall spend all my pin-money on plants — I warn you there. In plants, this glorious garden is behind the times, and nobody knows that better than Fry."

"I can see plots and counterplots."

"No — only tons of new plants — to bring the garden up to date."

He shivered slightly.

"Don't use that phrase, dearest heart. 'Up to date'— oh! the rich vulgarity of those three words. They always make me shudder, and I see they have crept into the highest journalism. You may find them in *The Times* or *Spectator* any day of the week."

She argued against him.

"Can you think of better words to say what they mean?"

"Certainly," he answered. "You mean that presently you want these gardens to be an epitome of contemporary horticulture."

They were alone and she kissed him at that. "You'll never use three words when you can say the same thing in ten, you precious boy!" she said.

An old man entered the orchard house as she kissed Sir Ralegh; but it was two hundred feet long, and he saw not the lovers until they had parted again.

"There's Fry. I must go and see the bulbs."

The head-gardener of Vanestowe was a Shropshire man, and thirty years of Devonshire had not slacked his northern energy, or inspired in him any sort of respect for west country labour. He was broad-browed and broad-shouldered, and of late he had grown corpulent. Still he worked and made others work. He was not a Conservative, but entertained a passionate regard for his master's family, and never permitted any underling to criticise the opinions of the house in his hearing, even though he might agree with him. His hair was white and his eyebrows were black. He wore a beard, now grizzled, and was rumoured to live night and day in a blue baize apron. While a good "all-round" gardener, and a man more than common skilled in most branches of his business, Adam Fry regarded himself as a specialist in two branches of horticulture only, one indoor and one out. He claimed expert skill in orchids, and rhododendrons and American plants; in expansive moments he would occasionally add apples; but he did not deny that there lived men who knew more about apples than himself, whereas, where

orchids and rhododendrons were concerned, he did deny it.

Loveday welcomed her friend with joy, because she had not seen him for six weeks. The autumn consignment from Holland was overdue; but Fry had several things to show her. They fell into deep garden talk, and Sir Ralegh, reminding his betrothed not to forget the luncheon hour, soon left them. He liked to know that his gardens were important and his rhododendrons the finest in the country; he also liked to hear from those who understood the matter that his gardener was a pearl of great price, a shining light and a tower of strength; but his heart was with his keepers and at the kennels; and he felt a passing regret that his betrothed could not share his enthusiasm for sport.

"To Shrewsbury I went," said Mr. Fry in answer to Loveday's question. "Yes, miss, and never hope to see a better show. The R.H.S. couldn't beat it at that time of year. Sir Ralegh let me spend fifty pounds."

"He never told me!"

"'Twas to be a surprise. Some wonderful fine things, and a peat plant or two I've wanted for years. Out of doors there's little for the minute. The new asters aren't no better than the old. Dierama did better than ever before, and the white one made a stir, as you remember."

"Did the seed ripen?"

"I've got three pans coming on brave."

They went to look at certain new purchases and the peat lovers nigh the fern glade. Here rodgersia, gunnera, and rheum spread mighty leaves, while

overhead was a stir of grey thrushes enjoying the ruddy fruits of arbutus.

"How's the seedling?" asked Loveday, and Mr. Fry's face became animated.

"Beautifully budded up," he said.

"You've waited long, Adam; I do hope it will reward you."

"May or may not. With a seedling rhodo you never can say nothing sartain till after, or prophesy afore you know. 'Tis like a child, miss; you nurse it year after year and hope on and hope ever; but 'tis a brave long time before the boy or maid comes to blooming, so as you can tell the quality of the blossom."

"Sometimes they don't blossom at all, Adam."

"Nay," he said. "They always blossom — for good or bad they come, and we nurse 'em; but we can't always tell what they be good for in a minute, and the bud that doth promise least will often open into a very proper thing."

Under their feet was a green carpet composed of hundreds of seedling rhododendrons, and overhead the parents towered to noble specimen plants, some forty feet high. Here were Clivianum, Aucklandii, Falconeri, Roylei, arboreum, Manglesii, Fortunei, campanulatum, campylocarpum, Thomsoni and the rest, with many a choice hybrid from the famous Cornish growers and a treasure or two from Irish collections.

"It always seems to me a sin and a shame that these millions of babies should be allowed to perish," declared Loveday, bending and picking up half a dozen seedlings.

"It is," admitted the gardener; "and if Sir Ralegh wants to do a good turn to some young chap and set him up with a store of stuff that may be worth thousands in twenty years' time, then it could be done. There's countless young plants in the rhodo beds and rhodo walk. And there's not a shadow of doubt that out of every fifty seedlings — seeing what the parents must be — you'd get a treasure or two. You only want twenty years to come in to your own, and in many cases no doubt the things would flower in fifteen or less."

They inspected a certain maiden seedling reverently. It promised well, and was full of flower-bud for the coming spring.

"I hope it's going to be your greatest triumph, Adam, though I don't see how it can be lovelier than Fry's 'Silver Trumpet,' or the 'Sir Ralegh.'"

"Wait and see, as Mr. Asquith says," answered the gardener. "It 'tis worthy of you, it shall be called 'Miss Merton.'"

"No," she said. "I should hate that. There are thousands of Miss Mertons in the world. You must call it — just 'Loveday.' There's only one Loveday Merton, that I know of."

Mr. Fry was doubtful.

"I'm with you; but Sir Ralegh would think it too familiar."

"Not he. How's Martha?"

"The missis is very tidy. Shropshire did her a power of good this year. There's nothing like native air sometimes if you are called to live in a foreign one. In this here snug hole under Haldon, we breathe cotton-wool instead of air three parts o' the year."

"All very well to growl, Adam; you know that, after all, gardening is more important than whether you breathe cotton-wool or not. You wouldn't leave Vanestowe for the greatest garden in Shropshire."

He admitted it. Then, far away, sunk to a mere drone in the distance, a gong sounded.

"It's luncheon," she said. "I must fly. I'll come and see Martha later if I can."

She ran like a child, descended to the drive, and met a dog-cart flashing up it. A woman drove, a young man sat beside her, and a groom occupied the seat behind. They were still three hundred yards from the house, and Loveday begged for a lift.

"What luck, Nina! Let me jump up by Joseph. No, don't get down, Joe. Then united we can defy Lady Vane. How is it you're late, of all people?"

"Lost a shoe at Beggars Bush. But am I late?"

"Just five seconds, no more."

Miss Spedding's famous trotter soon brought them to the ivy-mantled door of the house, and in a few moments Loveday, the elder girl, and her brother joined the luncheon-party.

Nina was a showy maiden of seven-and-twenty — dark and handsome, but with a virginal and cold beauty that became her reputation of the best woman rider in the county. She loved sport, and endured much secretly for it. Immense trouble was involved by a tendency to wealth of flesh, but she fought it, starved, and led a life of tremendous physical energies. Behind the scenes, dumb-bells and exercises filled a large part of her time. Her brother, Patrick, showed the family failing. He was fat and lazy and not a sportsman. He made no attempt to fight the scourge.

He had congratulated Nina when a man, to whom she was engaged, threw her over.

"Horribly distressing; but a blessing in disguise," declared Patrick Spedding. "She'll worry like the devil, because she was really fond of him, and it will help to keep her thin."

The Neill-Savage sisters were thin enough, as became women of slightly raptorial instincts. They suggested able, but elderly hawks, who made experience serve them for the vanished activity and enterprise of youth. They were both turning grey reluctantly, the tell-tale strands being woven in with a sparing hand. They were very poor, but well-born and related to the Vanes. Their lives flowed by subterranean channels, but flashed out intermittently in high places. They practised the art of pleasing, and lived on a huge circle of friends. With considerable genius, they planned their visits in such a way that they should never reappear too frequently in any environment. Their orbits were prodigious. They touched all manner of symptoms and contrived to do all the things that their social order did. Patrick Spedding said of them that they were the wisest women in the world, and had given all philosophy and ethics the go-by. "They have discovered the art of getting everything for nothing," he said; "they have defied nature, which has always asserted that that is impossible; and incidentally they have solved another everlasting problem — the secret of perpetual motion." The sisters were on the Riviera in the winter, in London after Easter, in Scotland after July. They varied their rounds in detail, of course, from year to year; but their scheme of existence ran

on general large principles which changed not. At times of special stress they disappeared, and it was suspected that they accepted temporal advantages in exchange for their social significance and prestige. There was no nonsense about them, and they used their connections and knowledge of good society for what it was worth. The middle-class was a healing stream, into which they occasionally sank, and from which they emerged refreshed. They were now fifty and fifty-three, and no men of their own rank had ever loved either of them. They were plain, yet still blessed with exceedingly fine figures. They had wondered in secret why offers of marriage had only come from well within the fringe of the middle-class; and Stella, who might have married a rich stock-broker, twenty-five years earlier in her career, felt disposed to regret refusal on her fiftieth birthday. Because, with the passing of mid-Victorian society, had also passed the old distinctions, and every year now made the Neill-Savage stock-in-trade, blue blood and an aristocratic connection, of less market value. They moved with the times, however, were without illusions, devoted keen intellects to the need and fashion of the passing hour, and both played a game of bridge that brought them invitations from eligible quarters.

Lady Vane sat at the head of the luncheon table and her son occupied the foot of it. She wore her hat, and Sir Ralegh's peculiarities of intonation and gesture were exactly revealed in her. From her he had his distinguished voice, peculiar glance of eye down the sides of his nose and lift of the eyebrow at moments of reflection. But his heart came from

his father; and the lady lamented in secret that to her son belonged a characteristic softness she had always sought to combat in her husband. She was a Champernowne, and Loveday's uncle, Admiral Felix Champernowne, was her cousin.

The sisters Neill-Savage were in the best possible form. They had just come from Scotland, and were spending a week with an acquaintance near Exeter. In the course of conversation Sir Ralegh begged them to join a house-party at Vanestowe in January, whereupon Stella turned to Lady Vane.

"How nice of him; but I know what men are. Does he mean it, or does he just say it on the spur of the moment, because he liked that story about the Duke of Flint?"

"He means it, I'm sure. You'll be doing us an enormous kindness. Ralegh hates bridge, and so do I. If you'll come and play bridge and keep the sportsmen from going to sleep after dinner, it will be perfectly divine of you both."

"But he don't hunt, you know — not for years."

"It would just fit in before Costebelle," said Annette, the younger sister. "Your place must look very grand and stern in winter, Sir Ralegh."

Loveday thought she liked the Misses Neill-Savage better on this occasion. She always pitied threatening age. Now she talked to Annette and shared a gigantic pear with her when dessert came.

Admiral Champernowne discussed family matters with his cousin, while Sir Ralegh and Nina Spedding spoke of sport and the rapacities, not of reynard, but the farmers. The lord of the manor shook his head doubtfully.

"One is most reluctant to grumble; but it cannot be denied that Bassett and Luke — to name no others — are telling fibs about the destruction of poultry."

"The farmers are so mean-spirited and narrow and horrid about hunting," she said. "I'm sure your generosity is the talk of the hunt. There was never another Master who did so much himself."

"I am very glad to do it," he declared. "And, indeed, I've nothing to grumble about. I hate sending round the hat, but it always comes in full when I do."

They talked of horses and Miss Spedding's new hunter. Sir Ralegh knew its sire, and was very anxious for more information respecting its dam.

Everybody appeared to be concerned with things; none showed any interest in ideas. But it was Loveday Merton who lifted the conversation and made Annette talk of Italy and art.

To the Neill-Savages all subjects were alike, and many years of experience had fortified their minds with opinions on most matters of human interest. They simulated enthusiasm or aversion with the ease of artists, and none knew their honest convictions, their real hopes and fears and beliefs. This was not strange, because neither had been constitutionally endowed to feel anything in the abstract. Life, as it impinged upon their experience, alone made them feel. In matters of theory they could always take the side offered to them and agree with anybody quite seriously. Herein lay their power for the majority. They held that only the rich can afford the luxury of definite convictions; the poor must charm; and to do so with any sort of conscience, it is neces-

sary that they should preserve a fluid mind and wide understanding. For suffer the intellect to crystallise, permit opinions to take the place of ready sympathy, and friends will begin to drop off, like frost-bitten fruit from the bough.

Lady Vane talked to Loveday about her visit to London, and for the first time she heard of the girl's meeting with Bertram Dangerfield.

"He banged up against me in the cast room at the British Museum, and in two minutes we were talking as if we had known each other all our lives."

"Talking?" asked Lady Vane. "What on earth had you to talk about to him?"

"Art. He lives for art; and he doesn't care about anything else. It's quite extraordinary. One would think it was the only interest in the world."

"How did you find out who he was?"

"He wanted me to go to lunch, and, of course, I wouldn't. Then I told him where I came from, and—"

"Why did you tell him that?" asked Sir Ralegh.

"I had to, because I had asked him where he came from. He lives in Florence. He's most entertaining. I wonder how he paints?"

"I can tell you," said Stella Neill-Savage. "At least I can tell you how I think he paints. He had a big picture at the British Artists last spring. It was a classical subject—in the Watts style, but very different colour—very large, very simple, and very beautiful—at least I thought so. D'you remember it, Annette?"

"I do," replied her sister. "A lustrous thing with plenty of rose and silver-grey and ivory in it

— rather like a huge Albert Moore. 'Pandora' it was called. He wanted five hundred guineas for it."

"Good powers! A boy like that asking such an enormous price! But money's no object to him. His father loved art and left him a fortune. I've heard all about him from Lady Dangerfield. I think she has a sneaking admiration for him, though she says he's a godless reprobate."

It was Lady Vane who spoke, and Loveday answered.

"It came out that he was her nephew. I believe he's plotting to come and see her."

"Come and see you more likely," suggested Nina. "He'll want to paint you for certain."

"He was funny. His eyes are like lightning. He saw my engagement ring through my glove, and asked what you were like, Ralegh."

"The cheek of these artist men!" cried young Spedding. "Of course, he'll want to paint you, as Nina says."

"That is all settled," answered Sir Ralegh. "Loveday will be painted by — probably Shannon — when she is presented after our marriage. No *pictor ignotus* shall libel her — only an approved painter who has won his spurs — an Academician, of course."

"Quite right," declared Miss Neill-Savage. "Some of the moderns are atrocious. Art is in a flux at present. There is no law or order in anything, what with Post-impressionists and Futurists and other schools each trying to be madder than the last."

"We hear too much of art in my opinion," re-

plied the host. "I see everywhere an almost insolent demand that art should be thrust to the forefront of life, as though it were destined to take the place of the real, vital interests. I must say the days of patrons, when artists were kept in their proper place, and not allowed to dictate to their betters and give themselves all these ridiculous airs, appeal to me. And, mark you, the masterpieces were produced in those days. When men of birth and breeding controlled and inspired the painters and poets, and such like people, then the best work was done."

"No doubt young Dangerfield is arrogant and ridiculous — like all of them," suggested Nina Spedding, and Loveday felt compelled to fight for the absent painter.

"I'm an artist myself in a tiny way, you know, so I declare that you are rather too hard on him," she said. "He is arrogant, but he isn't ridiculous, and if you are to judge him, you must hear first how he stands among serious artists and what his opinions are worth."

"We are not judging him, Loveday — far from it. 'Judge not at all' is a very wise motto for the plain man before all questions of art and literature; but doubtless he belongs to the modern movement, which is striving to put art in an utterly wrong relation to life, and I cannot have my sense of perspective and proportion upset by these claims. The uglier the art, the more noise they make about it. Artists, in fact, like all other people, must be kept in their proper places. There is an inclination to dictate to the nation; and not content with stick-

ing to their last, they must needs make themselves supremely ridiculous by becoming propagandists and flinging themselves into all sorts of questions that don't concern them."

"Art is undoubtedly becoming a great weapon in the hands of the intellectuals," declared Miss Neill-Savage. "Art for art's sake is a cry of the past. 'Art for life's sake,' is what they say now. Art must be alive, and it must challenge and arrest and give to think."

"So it must," declared Loveday, "and why not? Nietzsche says—"

"I'm almost sorry, Loveday, that you can—" began Lady Vane, but she broke off, conscious that it was not a happy moment to chasten her future daughter-in-law. She was, however, irritated, and soon rose. The women followed her, and, when they had gone, Sir Ralegh spoke to Admiral Champernowne, while Spedding, who was a familiar guest, left them to join the ladies in the garden.

"Why will Loveday read that trash? She knows so well that it bothers my mother. I don't particularly mind, because one cannot combat falsehood and folly without mastering the wrong motives and false arguments. At the same time, a woman's mind is so easily unbalanced. They lack our ballast, and have a certain unhappy instinct to fly to ills they know not of—witness the Suffragettes and anti-marriage women, and their last developments; but one looks on to the future. I cannot treat her like a child and tell her what literature I put on my index. It is so absurd."

"She's got a brain," declared the Admiral.

"It's unfortunate in a way when a beautiful woman isn't content to reign as women used to, and have us at their feet, and rule the world through us, without bothering about the machinery that we have set up for our own uses. They throw away the priceless things with both hands in their struggle for our paltry privileges. Loveday is certainly a little bitten with modernism. But I do my best to steady her. She is very young, and won't realise that she is very beautiful."

"I'm sure I've told her so often enough," said Sir Ralegh. "It is the old story, Admiral. Idleness always tends to mischief and Satan finds some mischief still."

"But she's not idle."

"We must saddle her with more responsibility," declared Loveday's betrothed. "Leave this to me and my mother."

"To you — not Lady Vane, Ralegh. You'll forgive my bluntness, but she and Loveday haven't found just the line of least resistance yet. They will, of course; but your mother's — well, reactionary, you know. Quite right — always right, for nowadays if you give the people an inch they'll 'go to hell,' as my groom said yesterday. You can't be too cautious — still — it's in the air — equality and one man as good as another, and all the rest of this infernal nonsense. Your plan is the wisest; Lady Vane is — but I'm on dangerous ground."

"Don't think that we have not thrashed out these questions," answered the younger man. "I go a long way with my mother, but not all the way. We must be prepared for changes and meet them in the

right spirit. Concession and compromise are the watchwords."

The other nodded.

"The sea advances upon the land," he said, "but while the water swallows the earth in one place, it is the business of the earth to bob up again somewhere else, and so restore the balance. Capital is not doing this. The ruling classes have not solved the problem of how to give in one direction and get back in another. Now my theory—"

Admiral Champernowne fired a broadside of popguns from his "three-decker" mind, and then they went into the garden together.

CHAPTER IV

THE LETTER

LOVEDAY received a letter presently. It was long, but she found it exceedingly interesting. None had ever written to her in this strain before; yet there was that in her to welcome the letter and feed upon it. The communication came like a light upon her vague aspirations and nebulous thinking. It fired her; it indicated a starting point; it invited her to take her dreams seriously and apply them to some practical end — if only the end of self-culture.

"MEDICI CLUB, LONDON.

"DEAR MISS MERTON,—

"I love art above all things, and look to it for the rejuvenescence of the earth some day; therefore it follows that I could wish everybody else did the same. You are a likely disciple, and if, by taking a little thought, I can win you to the fold of the elect, I shall be proud and glad; because you are clever and beautiful; and if you once grow enthusiastic, you may justify your existence and be a noble inspiration for art in others, even though you produce none yourself.

"You ought to animate a glorious picture some day, or impel a poet to big work. So I want to help you yourself to plant your feet firmly; and I want you to be Greek.

"They say the Greek spirit is dead, and that it is affectation to try and revive it. But how can eternal principles die? How can a creative afflatus founded on the logic of pure reason die? The new energy I recognise; but it does not destroy the old. Chaos cannot kill cosmos, any more than the supernatural can smudge out rationalism. An avalanche may bury the vernal gentian; but time will sweep the one away, while the other is immortal, and the same sunshine that melts the snow will revive the little flower's everlasting blue. No truth slays another truth, and if we profess and practise a psychology in art that the Greek knew not; if the Renaissance brought forth an art of the soul that was foreign to Attic genius, that is not to say that the earlier art cannot still flash its beacon and lift its ideals. There are a sort of men whose instinct and habit of mind chime with the old order — the men who base the prime of human achievement on reason, and who look to reason for all that is most beautiful, serene, and sane — in the future as in the past. These men are Greek, and live: Keats, Landor, Swinburne, Thorvaldsen, Hewlett, occur to me on the instant. If you love the thin mysticism of a Maeterlinck, I say nothing. If you like Belgian fog better than sunshine on the Acropolis — well, who shall dispute about tastes? If the eternal, stuffy miasma of sex attracts you, I'm merely sorry; and sorrier still if the thing called 'realism' is welcome to your spirit; but don't reverse the old maxim and praise the present at the expense of the past, after the fashion of certain affected moderns, who shout that the heirlooms of the earth should be built into a

bonfire to illuminate the deformities of the latest men. As for 'realism' in art, it becomes such a dismal fetich, that one has to fly to real life to escape from it!

"The Greek spirit lives, because it was built on the sure rock of human reason, and — be there gods or be there none — reason is responsible for the enduring things in philosophy and art and science. I judge that the new forms are but a midge-dance at sundown; and the men who maul marble to-day will be forgotten forever when the names of Myron and Phidias are mightier than now. The painters — but I hope, lady, you'll come to see what was done by certain busy men of Tuscany before a Matisse hoodwinked the élite, or a Picasso built portraits with bricks and extracted the soul from a wine-glass. Surely there are far better things to be extracted from a wine-glass than its soul? And how roughly time deals with these modern masters! Soon even the Futurists will be futurists no more, but mere glow-worms of a forgotten night. Presently we shall have a new Ruler Art of the nursery, and none will be allowed to touch a brush or pen after the magistral age of five years. But out of the smother, those things that we saw at the British Museum will persist in their majesty and might — the Parthenon to an ants' nest.

"Don't you believe the people who tell you that we go to paganism for form and to Christianity for colour. The colour of the Greeks is gone; but it is sufficient that you merely reply, 'Titian — Turner.' You can't link these men up with Christianity if you're honest — for there's not a spark in either.

Venice was born of the Orient, and the Orient has no use for Christianity, and never will have.

"So I beg and implore that you go back to the alpha and omega, and if you mean to study art and make it an abiding joy and delight for the rest of your life, let it be on the Greek values — neither before them nor after them. Reflect more, and have your being in rationalism. Keep your mind clean of superstition and sticky prejudices and the fatal religious bias that has killed so much art and vitiates so much modern criticism. Superstition, you must remember, poisons the very holy of holies in a man's heart.

"Art to-day is almost entirely in the hands of the lower middle-class (to classify without snobbishness), and nobody in the least realises what a catastrophe that is. You can't get Ruler Art out of the lower middle-class. It is an impossibility.

"Take our own Swift or Landor, and then consider these people, and you will say again, as I did just now, 'The Parthenon to an ants' nest.' In the lower middle-class the art-lovers, of whom there are many, understand the best in literature and pictures and music as few among us do. But they despise tradition, and know no reverence. They play the piano and play it well; but they play it in their shirt-sleeves, with a bottle of beer beside them. And, remember, they are proud of this abominable attitude, because they despise tradition. Do you see what that means? They simply don't understand coming to Bach in purple and fine linen. It isn't in their blood to bend the knee. Only the proud can do that. They lack the classical sense, and pre-

tend that what they lack must be needless. They sneer at the dead languages — as the live ass sneers at the dead lion. Their taste in art is often austere and fine; but their taste in life is simply hideous. Such painters and writers will never help to turn human society into a work of dignified art; they will never make their own lives masterpieces. They are formless, remember — a cardinal sin — and it is in vain they tell you that the chaotic of to-day is the classical of to-morrow. Nothing without a skeleton can endure. Some art is alive and some art is fossil, but everything that has lasted was built on a skeleton of form and modelled with the steel of a stern selective power. It has been said by a very great artist that 'to stand with the doors of one's soul wide open, to lie slavishly in the dust before every trivial fact, at all times of the day to be strained ready for the leap, in order to deposit oneself into other souls and other things — in short, the famous "objectivity" of modern times, is bad taste, vulgar, cheap.'

"And, what's more, it isn't creating: it's collecting — as the miser piles gold pieces, or the bibliophile, books. And the resultant pile is — what? The ants' nest again — a formless heap with every scrap of equal value. Formless and stuffy, too. We all know the stuffy writers, and painters, and musicians, and actors. They lack touch and taste and the selective super-sensitiveness of the real swells. Don't be led away by them and their mean philosophies. Remember that an ounce of imagination is worth a hundredweight of observation every time. Observation may be a good ladder; but im-

agination is a pair of wings, and without wings we can only creep and catalogue.

"If you want to know any more about it; if you want to hear of the art that stands on a plane a million miles above the things we mortals call ugliness and beauty and truth — the art that is my god — then I'll go on. But this is enough for a start. I shall know by your reply whether it's worth while writing any more to you.

"Meantime, believe me,

"Yours most truly,

"BERTRAM DANGERFIELD."

Loveday fastened on the last words first. "Conceited horror!" she said to herself. "No, indeed, my friend, you won't know by my reply if it's worth while writing any more, because — I shan't reply."

But she was not ungrateful; indeed, the letter awakened many moods, and in some of these the girl felt hearty thanks that a stranger should have been at such trouble on her behalf. When she thought about responding, however, certain portions of the letter barred the way. He had implied that she would be more likely to inspire than create; and this was hard to forgive.

She showed the letter to Sir Ralegh, who read it with pensive and puzzled eyes.

"What on earth does he want to say, and what does he suggest that you are to do? I should be sorry for you to go as a pupil to such a harum-scarum chap."

"But you love the Greek things, Ralegh?"

"In their places. They have their stateliness and classical charm. They are part of the world's wealth. I have read the tragedies, of course, and understand the point of view. And he is right about Latin and Greek, no doubt. But it is nonsense at this stage of the world's progress to talk about putting the Greek spirit first. He ignores Christianity and its significance. Worse, he distinctly slights it."

"He would hate your stags' heads and tiger skins and things."

"Such trophies are proper to the decoration of such a vestibule and hall as we have at Vanestowe. Whether this gentleman would hate them or not, is a matter that hardly concerns me."

"He'd like the leopard skins — for mænads and bacchanals."

"I see a danger in this man," declared her betrothed. "He talks of art as being above truth. Now that is lax and immoral and unsound. There can be no excuse for nonsense of that sort."

"I'm sure he doesn't mean it for nonsense," said Loveday. "He's in deadly earnest. The question is, shall I answer him?"

"Of course, you must acknowledge it. I will give him the credit of meaning well and kindly. He is young."

"Young and joyous."

"Acknowledge the letter with thanks. Tell him that his theories interest but by no means convince you. His last sentence suggests that he doesn't quite know how to write to a woman; and yet a Dangerfield should be a Dangerfield — even though an artist."

Loveday laughed.

"I expect he would hate to hear you say that."

"Why?"

"Because he thinks — I'm sure of it — that it is a much finer thing to be an artist than a Dangerfield."

"Yes," he said. "I'm not unreasonable; I can quite imagine the young, enthusiastic, callow mind capable of taking that position. But, believe me, in time to come, when he has seen more of the world and had wider experience, he will get his philosophy and views of life and art into better order."

"But he does stand up for caste, you see, and wishes art could be taken out of the hands of the lower middle-class."

"It is no good talking like that. Art, at best, is a very minor matter. It is the things that count that I should like to take out of the hands of the lower middle-class — if I could. One views it with profound respect but gathering uneasiness. The power of the lower middle-class increases by leaps and bounds. They are the backbone of the nation, and they know it."

"I'll answer his letter, then?"

"In such a way that Mr. Dangerfield will not feel called upon to elaborate his ideas any further. He is probably like most quite young men: he mistakes feeling for thinking, and thinks as he goes along. It will be time enough for him to impose his opinions upon other people when they are a little better considered."

Loveday, rather impressed by this criticism, prepared to reply, but before doing so she visited the

writer's aunt — one Lady Constance Dangerfield, the widow of Bertram's uncle.

She lived near Chudleigh in a broad, low house surrounded by a modern verandah. The garden was full of flowers; the verandah had been turned into a large aviary, in which dwelt fifty birds, some musical and plain, some brilliant and harsh. They made a great noise, but Lady Dangerfield chanced to be rather deaf, and the clatter did not trouble her. She was short and stout, and her hair slowly relinquished its original sand colour for silver-grey. Her eyes were blue and keen; her outlook cynical, her humour genuine, but of a saturnine quality. Loveday, however, was a favourite, and generally won the lady to a more benign outlook on life. She read her nephew's letter and surprised the recipient.

"I've heard all this a thousand times. And I'm going to hear it all over again soon. He's coming to me. Yes, he has pretended that he wants to paint me. The scamp writes that he's only been waiting for my hair to turn a nice colour, and feels sure that the time has come. And now you've brought this letter and given him away. How silly he'll look when I tell him that I've seen it! And how silly he'll think you were to show it to me!"

"Coming here!"

"If I ask him. Shall I?"

"It would be lovely to get a good picture of you — if he's clever enough."

"He's quite clever enough. He amuses me, because his theories are so lively. One may indulge in lively theories. It is only practice that knocks the bottom out of them. There's truth in this screed.

The world is soon going to belong to the lower middle-class; and for faith we shall have a sort of mild, Marcus Aurelian free-thought — cotton-woolly — close and rather mean, and consequently rather popular. The lonely, lofty spirits will retire to caves, only to be poked out and hunted to death. Bertram will find himself like the hawk in the poultry-yard presently — a cork on his beak and his claws cut off. Then he'll have to change his theories, or be pecked to pieces by the fowls of the earth."

"He'll live alone and escape the traps," prophesied Loveday. "When's he coming?"

"He says next Monday; therefore it will be sooner or later than that. Sir Ralegh must ask us to dinner. I should like to see them together."

"I do think he might give us all some new ideas," declared the younger. "I'm sure we ignore art too much in England, Lady Dangerfield."

"They order this better in France. Here people are either idiotic and hysterical about art, or else brutally indifferent. But there is a golden mean."

"D'you know what your nephew believes? He's not a Christian."

"Who is? Who believes anything when it comes to the test of labouring or suffering for it? Look round you at the county. D'you know one man in it who is as frightened of God as he is of the gout? Does one care for his soul as he does for his stomach? Not one man — unless it's your man."

"Mr. Dangerfield must come to see Vanestowe and the gardens and Adam Fry."

"And you. No doubt he'll come."

"I'm afraid he's a great humbug."

"Like most great men."

"D'you call him, 'great,' Lady Dangerfield?"

"He will be. His father was so-so; but his mother was one of the cleverest women I ever met. She had Italian blood in her from the Strozzi. He gets his passion for art from her; but where he gets his power from, who can tell?"

"Could he paint you with your dear birds round you?"

"No doubt he could. A charming thought, as the birds would distract attention from the subject. But, of course, if I suggest it, he won't."

Loveday sped away.

"Now I needn't answer the letter," she reflected. Yet she could not resist the pleasure of answering it, because she had thought of a sharp and clever thing to say. There was a little sting in it—a sting for his sting.

CHAPTER V

A DESERTED HUSBAND

A PRETTY house called "The Côte" stood a mile from Vanestowe. It was the residence of Hastings Forbes and his wife, Una. Her origin was obscure, and about her there were no indications of "L.D.," by which letters Sir Ralegh and his circle understood the sacred and magic words, "Long Descent"; but none the less, Mrs. Forbes had won the hearts of many beside her husband.

Women liked her little. Lady Dangerfield said that they could not forgive her for understanding men so well. She triumphed over the masculine soul, hunted, intrigued, entertained, and kept a man cook.

Her husband was tall, handsome, and colourless. She never ceased from urging him to do some work in the world, but it was not his ambition. They differed much in secret, and Mrs. Forbes had been heard publicly to say she would not have married Hastings had she known of his incurable laziness. He was interested in daffodils and golf. Once he had gone to the Pyrenees to collect daffodils and returned with thirteen roots. These perished, and he trusted henceforth to nurserymen. To please his wife he undertook the duties of Secretary to the Haldon Golf Club, and it was in connection with this institution that Sir Ralegh called upon Mr. Forbes during the forenoon of a day in October.

He found the man in his smoking-room, huddled up by the fire in a state bordering on collapse. Beside him was a cellaret and siphon. He was clad in silver-grey flannels with a scarlet tie, and on his feet were violet socks and white leather lawn-tennis shoes.

"Morning, Forbes — why, what's the matter with your hair?"

The other rose and took the hand extended to him.

"Vane," he said, "she's run away — my wife. She's always had scores of men friends; but, of course, I thought her straight as a line. You'll never guess who it was. Forgive me if I'm incoherent. She leaves a letter for me. Alphonse has had a sort of fit about it in the kitchen. There has been no breakfast. I have not done my hair. Naturally you noticed it. The cynicism — the bitter cynicism! A bolt from the blue. In a word — a dentist! A wretched dentist from Exeter. I believe his beastly name is Wicks; but I can't read her letter very well. She doesn't even take the trouble to write clearly. It came by post this morning, and Alphonse got one at the same time telling him not to leave me for the present. He's an American dentist. I've been suspicious, Vane, because her teeth are absolutely perfect. She met him last year. There is no concealment. She has gone to Italy with him."

Sir Ralegh was deeply concerned.

"Good God! My dear fellow — are you sure this is not some ghastly fooling — some terrible mistake?"

Hastings shook his head, then bent it. His voice was broken.

"She's had enough of me, I suppose. I've always tried to be sporting to her. I've always considered her tastes, and never been jealous or any rot of that sort. I needn't tell you that. And I've always been true as steel myself. I'm infernally honourable where women are concerned. We married for love thirteen years ago. She's a few years older than I am. I wanted children, you know, Vane. I'm fond of children. But she had her own ideas about that, so we agreed not to have any. I wish I had been firmer about it now. It might have made all the difference. Of course, this is in strictest confidence. I'm saying more than one ought to say — but you'll understand. Fancy getting up and not brushing one's hair! That shows. She was always tremendously fond of masculine society, as you may remember. She liked them round her — naturally. I never grudged the tribute. It was a compliment to me as well as her. But — impropriety — I'd have called out any man who had whispered the word in connection with her! I never dreamed of such a thing but once. There was a stupid kissing scene I dropped in upon years ago. But it was nothing — a boy. In fact, I may say I trusted her implicitly."

"I'm awfully sorry for you, my dear fellow. Upon my soul it staggers me," confessed the other. "One *hears* of these things, and one knows they happen; but to have such a tragedy here — I always thought you were an example to all married people. Your home seemed built upon the very highest principles of reciprocity between man and woman."

"It was — it was," declared the deserted husband. "I tell you this is the most shattering and unex-

pected thing that you could imagine. 'Affinity' is the word she uses. After thirteen years with me — heart to heart, and not a secret between us — so far as I knew — she finds an 'affinity' — a dentist. It's adding insult to injury — like being run over by a donkey-cart, after you've won the V.C. A dentist — somehow in this darkest moment of my life, I feel — however —"

He rose.

"What did you come for?"

"Only some trifle about the club. Never mind that. I am profoundly sorry for you, Forbes. This is a crusher. At such a time one begins to measure the worth of one's friends. Don't forget that I count myself your friend. Command me if I can do anything for you."

"I know it. I can't thank you enough. Unfortunately the world is powerless to help me."

"You must get free and then face life. It's a hard stroke, but you're well rid of her."

"There are wheels within wheels," murmured Hastings Forbes. "It means — but why the devil should I bother you with the thing? I can't expect anybody else to be interested."

"The details are, of course, sacred, and you know that other people's business is a subject very distasteful to me," answered Sir Ralegh. "But if I can help you, the case is altered. Only I don't see how I can."

"You can't. Nobody can. There is a very peculiar cowardice in what my wife has done. It's fearfully unsporting. You won't let it go further; but, as a matter of fact, she has the money. I

haven't a penny. My total private income from all sources is two hundred a year. I will be just to her. She always wanted me to seek work with emolument; but from the first she knew that I had no intention of doing so. Constitutionally I am not suited to any life involving regular mental application. I can't help that. I was made so. It was my ambition, therefore, from a comparatively early age, to marry a woman of good means, who might need my help and care in the administration of her fortune. I fell in with Una when I was three-and-twenty — a youth, but a youth with an old head on young shoulders. I had been called upon at my father's death to face poverty, Vane, and the experience had saddened and aged me. It had also disgusted me. But Una came into my sphere. She was an orphan of six-and-twenty. One need not bother you with her life; but you can bear testimony to her charm and distinction of mind, her vivacity, her repartee. She also had beautiful thoughts on religion and a future existence which naturally were reserved for me. At least one always thought so; but God knows now. Fancy having secrets with a dentist! I feel as if I ought to shoot him, Vane. But then, again, who could shoot a dentist? "

" Don't talk like that. You know you're not the first man that has had to face this tragedy, my dear fellow."

" You see the situation is so involved. If I had the money, it wouldn't matter a button. And, looking back, I'm sorry I didn't let her have her way and settle a thousand a year on me, when she wanted to. She was madly in love, I may mention. But one

couldn't do that. At least, I didn't feel as if I could — then."

"You couldn't possibly have kept it in any case — after this."

"No — of course not — unthinkable. If you knew how hard I've tried to please that woman, Vane. I was a master in the art of looking the other way — utterly."

Sir Ralegh began to grow impatient.

"Don't dwell on the past now. You must look ahead."

"I'm doing so. I'm facing the future. Hence this depression. All gone — wife, means, position. You wouldn't think that a fiend — however, so it is. She doesn't even mention money in her letter."

"What does she mention?"

"You may read it if you — can. At times of emotion, which are almost hourly occurrences in her life, her handwriting, like her voice, gets out of control."

"I wouldn't read it for anything," declared the other. "I only ask if she has indicated her intentions."

"Her intentions — her present intentions — are to make a home in Italy and become the dentist's wife as soon as possible. She is greedy enough to add that if at any time I don't want Alphonse, she will be delighted to engage him again. Of course, she knows very well that I can't keep him. He gets a hundred a year. He'll go back to her. He worships her. One feels all over the shop after a crash like this. Really one doesn't know where to begin thinking. I'm sitting here just as if I was turned

into stone. Of course, she may change her mind. I confess I see a dim phantom of hope there."

"Do you! Then I'll leave you, Forbes," said Sir Ralegh, whose indignation had been growing. "I'm afraid if you feel that under any conceivable circumstances you could take your wife back—"

But the other was testy.

"My dear chap, don't preach, for God's sake! If the woman's got the money, it isn't a case of your taking her back; it's a case of her taking you back. I admit the indignity. It's a lesson and all that. But every man who marries money has to put his pride in his pocket from the first. That was perfectly easy for me, because I loved her devotedly, and perfect love casteth out self-respect, and everything."

Sir Ralegh stared, and the other continued:

"No—perhaps I don't mean that exactly. What the deuce am I saying? Leave me, Vane, before I lose your friendship. I have your sympathy—I know that."

"Be a man," advised the visitor. "You are not yourself—naturally unstrung. I will forget this—this rather impossible point of view. Forgive me for using the word; but a great shock often throws us off our guard. I wish you had a mother, or somebody to support you. Perhaps, till you see your lawyers, my friend, Hoskyns, the vicar at Whiteford—eh? He's an understanding priest and has seen life in all its aspects. Good-bye for the present. I shall not, of course, mention the matter even to my mother. It is for you to make it public when you choose. But be a man. If she was that sort, she

is better away. You have your life before you. Thirty-six is nothing, after all."

"It's far too old to begin to work, anyway. But thank you for what you've said, Vane. I appreciate your kindness more than words can tell. I shall spend the rest of my day writing to her. And — and — will you ask me to lunch or dinner or something presently — just to show you're on my side? Of course, there will be plenty of people to say she fled in self-defence from a brute and all that sort of thing —"

"If you're equal to it, come by all means. Drop in to dinner on Thursday. There's a nephew of Lady Dangerfield's coming — a sort of *protégé* of my betrothed — a painter chap."

"No — that's not the right atmosphere for the moment," said Mr. Forbes. "Art and lawlessness are synonymous terms in my opinion. She'll probably find that nobody thinks any the worse of her in Italy — that's why she's gone there. I shall write to her at great length. It will be the deuce of a letter; but an appeal to the past must be made. It's neck or nothing."

"Good-bye, good-bye. And take a higher tone if you want to keep the respect of your acquaintance in this trial," said Sir Ralegh.

He departed indignant and a good deal astonished, but not in the least amused.

CHAPTER VI

THE PAINTER MAKES A PICTURE IN THE GRASS

WHEN next Loveday went to Bickley Lodge, the home of Lady Dangerfield, she was called to the verandah to find her friend in the hands of the painter. The old woman sat against a background of a silver-grey shawl hung over a screen, and beside her, upon his pole, stood her favourite macaw — a heavy-beaked parrot plumed with dark blue and orange.

Bertram Dangerfield was drawing in charcoal on a big canvas.

"Don't move, Aunt Constance," he said. Then he rose, dusted his fingers, and shook hands with Loveday. He treated her as though he had known her all his life and seen her the day before.

"How d'you do? Isn't this a splendid subject? Do look at them from here. My angel of an aunt has promised ten sittings. D'you see how the splash of the parrot will weigh against the work-basket and silk. The colour makes my mouth water."

"May I watch you, or would you rather I went away?"

"Watch by all means, but don't talk. I like my sitter to talk all the time, but nobody else. Go on talking, Aunt Constance, please."

"The wretch considers my hair now paintable,"

said Lady Dangerfield. "And he likes the light here, and he likes the macaw, and he makes me wear this dress, which is far too thin for my comfort. But what cares he if a work of art is the result? Let him have his ten sittings — and let me have pneumonia."

"You won't get pneumonia," declared Bertram. "Drink a glass of cherry-brandy every half-hour and you'll be all right. But we may have to kill the macaw and stuff him, I'm afraid — if he will shriek so. It's a fiendish noise, and makes my hand shake."

"You'd like to kill me and stuff me too, I dare say," declared the sitter.

"No, no — mummies are horrid things. I shouldn't like you as a mummy, Aunt Constance. You shall live forever in your picture. It's going to knock Whistler's 'Portrait of his Mother' into a cocked hat."

He turned to Loveday.

"Another example of the Super-bounder in art," he said. "A genius, but a fearfully trying personality. Few great artists are great men — perhaps you've noticed that?"

"To be a great artist *is* to be a great man," declared Loveday; but he would not grant this.

"Not at all. You can produce greatness without being great. You'll think I'm going back on my letter and not putting art before everything; but I'm not. My idea of a great man — Steady, Aunt Constance! You've dropped your head an inch."

"I'm getting tired," she said.

"Not a bit of good *dreaming* of getting tired yet," he told her. "You shall see the drawing in — say

an hour. That will cheer you up. You don't know how interesting you are."

"May Loveday read to me, then?"

"I'd much sooner you talked than listened."

"How can anybody talk with you here?" she said. Then she spoke with the girl:

"Does Sir Ralegh know that Bertram has arrived?"

"Yes," said Loveday, "and he's going to ask you both to dinner, if you'll come. And he wanted to know if Mr. Dangerfield shot. And I told him I didn't think so."

"What did he say of my letter to you?" asked the artist.

"How d'you know I showed it to him?" she asked.

"I guessed you would."

"He thought you didn't take me seriously enough."

"Sorry."

"Did you like my letter?" asked Loveday in her turn.

"Adored it. That was a splendid score off me. Now we must really be quiet, or my aunt surely will go to sleep. I believe she'd look rather jolly asleep."

"You order me to talk," said Lady Dangerfield, "and then buzz, like a bee in a bottle, your stupid self. You scorn the country; but let me tell you that we are very advanced and independent people. We have a secretary of the golf club, and his wife has just run away from him with an American dentist."

"Well done, Chudleigh!" cried the painter. "Chudleigh is certainly creeping up."

"A most charming woman — in fact, the only charming woman within a radius of five-and-twenty miles — except Loveday. There is, however, a dark lining to the silver cloud: he was *my* dentist. They won't be happy for more than three months, I hope. He was so passionately attached to his work — quite as much an artist as you are."

"Modern dentists are."

"And, as Una Forbes truly wrote to me, she didn't run away with a dentist, but with a man. It can't last, however, because the dentist will triumph over the man, or, to put it poetically, the artist will triumph over the lover. That's always the tragical end of these affairs. To things like you — art is your real wife — women are only mistresses — the best of them."

"But Lady Dangerfield," began Loveday; whereupon the man silenced her.

"I implore you, Miss Merton, let my sitter talk, if you love art."

Loveday leaned back obediently.

"Artists," continued the old lady, "what are they? Everything but stable, or trustworthy, or steadfast. Change is the breath in their nostrils, and novelty the very blood in their veins. They are happy in the beginning — like this boy here — while the world is before them to conquer; but, as the years roll over their heads, and the things to be done are not done, and things that are done are failures; as the time gets shorter and art gets longer, and the smiling, coy sweetheart becomes the stern, insatiable

tyrant — why, darkness descends upon them, and sadness and the —"

"Don't!" cried Bertram. "It's too beastly of you! This is going to be a picture of smiling and contented old age, with prosperity suggested by the golden macaw and dignity by the crown of silver. If you wanted me to paint you as a sibyl, or prophetess of Hecate, or something of that sort, we must begin all over again. Talk about the joy of youth to us, and let Miss Merton and me be happy while we can. What is the chap like who has just lost his wife?"

"Charming," answered the sitter. "I never hope to meet a more sympathetic person. In fact, too sympathetic for a man. Still — quite charming. I'm very sorry for him. He feels it acutely. He told me the whole story last week. The heart of the complication lies in the fact that he has no means. But he was really fond of her too — not alone for what he could get. And now the world will demand work from him, if it's only the work of finding another wife with cash. There lies the real tragedy. He tells me — however, it was in confidence. He wasn't jealous enough, in my opinion. Too lazy even to be jealous. Handsome wives can't forgive that. He might so easily have pretended it, even though he did not feel it. I blamed him there, and he asked, not unreasonably, what was the good. 'If a woman loves a man better than her husband, the mere fact that the husband is jealous won't alter her affection for the other chap.' So poor Mr. Forbes put it. A dreary truth, no doubt."

"Rest," said the painter. "Take it easy while I

do the fowl. Can you let him come a little nearer to you, or will he peck you? "

They moved the macaw a trifle, and Loveday watched with interest to see the bird swiftly but surely make its appearance. The picture was to be a three-quarter length, and Miss Merton's respect grew greater every moment as she watched Dangerfield's slow but very beautiful and free draughtsmanship. Presently Lady Dangerfield posed again, and in another half-hour he declared the sitting to be at an end.

Loveday stayed to lunch, and, when it was ended, invited the artist to come and see Vanestowe.

" Ralegh and his mother are at Exeter," she said, " so we shall have it all to ourselves. I'll show you my dear Adam Fry. I know you'll want to paint him. And the autumn colour in the woods is getting more glorious every day."

They went together and walked by lanes hidden between lofty banks; then they reached the high road to Exeter, and finally the great gates of Vanestowe. These were of iron ornately wrought, and on the pillars stood the twin hippogriffs of the Vanes. Bertram admired the gates, but hated the fabulous animals.

She resented his criticism.

" I must stand up for my own armorial bearings to be," she said.

They found Adam Fry in an outhouse surrounded by fat bags of bulbs. The annual consignment had arrived from Holland, and Dangerfield heard of the scheme of colour planned for the Dutch garden and certain gigantic flowerbeds upon the terrace.

"I saw it in the Park last spring," she said. "It was too lovely."

He approved the plans, but made some modifications. Adam was interested in naturalising spring bulbs through the glades about his beloved rhododendrons. Indeed, that was the work at present occupying him.

"Show Mr. Dangerfield *the* seedling, Fry," directed Loveday; and Bertram was marched to the spot where a young rhododendron, twenty years of age, had set its first flower-buds.

"A cross between 'Manglesii' and 'Sir Thomas,'" explained the gardener. "'Sir Thomas' is a very fine thing between Arboreum and a doubtful father. 'Twas called after Sir Ralegh's father. And 'tis the hope of us all that this is going to prove a wonder. I rose it when I was forty-nine, and now I'm in sight o' seventy."

"And Fry is going to call it 'Loveday,' if it is good enough — aren't you, Fry?"

"If it is good enough, that will be its name," he answered.

Adam beamed upon his seedling, stroked the leaves, and removed a scrap of dead wood.

"I can hardly wait for it," declared the girl. "Fry's patience is amazing."

"If you're not patient after forty years of gardening, you never will be," answered the old man. "I pride myself on being as patient as God Almighty. I was saying to Stacey a bit ago, how 'tis only to let Nature have the laugh of us when we get impatient. His wife's with child, and the babby's due to be born to a week the same as my rhodo's due to

bloom. And he thinks his child will be a lot more successful than my rhodo; but, knowing his wife, I have my doubts. Not that I tell him so, for that would be to hurt the man's feelings."

They talked of the trees, and Mr. Fry uttered his ideas, while Loveday noticed that Bertram became quite quiet and played the part of interested listener. He made a good audience, and Adam evidently felt in a congenial presence, for he expanded and allowed himself to declare views usually reserved for familiars.

"I've often wished as I was a forest tree myself," he said; "and you might think 'twas a rather weak-witted thing to wish at first sight; but it ain't. For why? These here trees live two hundred year, and that's something in itself; and then, beyond that, they have a spring every year and be young again and in their green youth once more. But us — no more spring for us, no more shedding the white hair and breaking out a crop of brown; no more young wood; no more sap. They don't feel much and they don't think much; but they see the sun rise every day for two hundred year and more, and they neighbour with nice folk like themselves, and, once they've made good their space, they lift up from strength to strength, as the saying is, and live a very interesting life, in my opinion. I often think, as I work among 'em, how they must look down upon me and wonder what I was made for. But some of 'em know — or think they do — and yonder larches — a thousand of 'em — that sheet of yellow up over — every one of 'em went through my hands in my 'twenties.' I spread the dinky roots in the hole and

dropped the soft stuff atop and watered 'em in. And I pretend to myself sometimes that they remember, and say as I go along, ' There's the chap that planted us here; but what the mischief's come to him? Here we be, just growing up to our full strength, so straight and slim and fine, and he's got as round as a woodlouse, and his hair's white and he's turned into a regular old go-by-the-round! ' They don't know 'tis old age, of course, and can't feel for me no more than you young creatures can. Youth can't picture age, and so 'tis vain to ask the young to pity the old."

" You must plant a tree," said Loveday to Bertram. " Everybody who is anybody plants a tree when they come to Vanestowe. Have you moved the big Siberian crab, Adam? If not, get Stacey to come and move it; then Mr. Dangerfield can plant it. He's going to be famous some day."

" You must discover yourself before you can make the world discover you," answered Adam. " No doubt the young gentleman have done that much a'ready."

He took a little whistle from his pocket and blew it; whereupon a tall, shambling man with big yellow whiskers and a long, crooked nose appeared.

" Fetch the crab, that's on the trolley waiting, and bring him up over where the hole's dug for him, and tell Tom to bring the water-barrel," said Fry.

Then Bertram made a petition.

" Let me plant some crocuses," he begged. " There's a whole sack here, and here's a bank that wants planting. May I? I've an idea."

Loveday approved.

"You shall paint a picture in purple and yellow and white," she said. "And it shall be known as 'your bank' forevermore."

Bulbs of the three colours were brought, and Bertram instructed in the manner of planting. He became enthusiastic, for the possibilities were great.

"To paint in flowers — a magnificent idea!" he declared. "And the picture will fade every year and then come to earth again with Persephone. Now go away, if you please. I want to be all alone with this bank for an hour at least. And I want some string and some sticks to sketch my design."

Adam approved, and spoke of him behind his back.

"There's a bit of the gardener in him," he said. "I see it in his eyes. They be eyes of fire. A very understanding young youth, and if he can make pickshers, then he ought to bring his paint-box and do the edge of the north wood, where the maples are alongside the blue firs. The reds was in the sky last night as I went by, and 'twas like a living flame in the trees — the maples below and the beeches above."

"I'll ask him if he can do landscapes," she answered. "He's come here to paint Lady Dangerfield."

"A tree's autumn is a damned sight finer than a woman's," declared Adam. "What's the use of making shows of plain, old people — with all respect — when you might — ?"

"The people drop into the earth, but the autumn colour comes again," said Loveday.

They found the Siberian crab presently, and called Dangerfield. The ceremony was purely formal; he flung a handful of dust into the new hole where the tree now stood, and declared that it was well and truly planted by himself. Then he returned to the crocuses.

An hour later his work was done, and the young couple walked away together.

"I must paint Adam Fry," he said. "I like the angle of his back, and I like his eyes and his great eyebrows."

"What have you put into the grass?"

"Wait until next February — then you'll know. And you must write and tell me what you think of it."

She praised flowers, and said they were her first joy in life.

"And yet," he said, "there isn't one you'd like to have all the year round. The deathless flowers in Paradise will be a great bore. The charm of flowers is quite as much that they go as that they come. All charming things come and go. You come and go. I come and go. It fearfully imperils the charm of anything if it comes and stops. The flowers don't make themselves too cheap; they pick up their pretty frocks and trip away; and know that their welcome will be all the warmer next year. This business of retarded bulbs and birds and things is horrid — almost indecent. We might just as well retard ourselves and have unseasonable friends turning up at the wrong times, like grouse in June. You know how tasteless even the nicest people are if they come when you don't want them."

They parted presently, and he assured Loveday that he was dying to meet Sir Ralegh.

"As to landscape," he told her, in answer to a final question, "of course I paint landscape. I paint everything in the world. I'll meet you and your betrothed at the North Wood the day after to-morrow."

"They'll be six guns altogether," she told him, "but none of your sort. And if you're an impressionist, they won't understand; but they'll all be delightfully nice and forgiving."

CHAPTER VII

BAD FORM

TEN people came to the dinner-party given in honour of Bertram Dangerfield, and he sat between Loveday and Nina Spedding. Sir Ralegh had Lady Dangerfield on his right, while Admiral Champernowne, Loveday's maternal uncle, sat beside Lady Vane. The company included the bereaved Hastings Forbes; the Reverend Rupert Hoskyns, vicar of Whiteford, and his sister; Patrick Spedding, and Miss Nelly Grayson, a professional musician, who was related to Mr. Hoskyns, and was spending a sombre week at Whiteford Vicarage.

Dangerfield attempted to measure the men and strove to accommodate himself to their interests; while a few of them, with kindly instincts, made efforts to discuss art and painting. The attempts on both sides were laudable, but futile. Sir Ralegh and his friends could only see in the painter a self-sufficient youth with doubtful and dangerous views; while to Dangerfield these people were tinkling brass. He had met some of them before at the North Wood, and been amused to hear their opinions on a note, painted swiftly, of the autumn forest. The general opinion appeared to be that he was trying his colours, and would presently begin to paint.

"Did you ever finish that picture of the woods?"

asked Nina Spedding, who had been at the shooting-party.

"I thought you saw it finished. Don't you remember that I worked while you all fed, and Miss Merton brought me a glass of wine and a sandwich with her own fair hand?"

"It's impressionism, isn't it? You have to go a long way off to see it."

"Yes; and by going a little farther off still you needn't see it at all. Nothing is easier than avoiding unpleasant things."

"I didn't say it was unpleasant," she retorted rather sharply. "I merely said it was unfinished."

"It was quite finished, I thought. I'm going to give it to Sir Ralegh, if he'll accept it."

She yielded.

"I expect it will look jolly in a good frame."

"The frame shall save it," he promised.

Presently Admiral Champernowne set a light to the fire, and Dangerfield, who was growing uneasy, struck into conversation that did not concern him.

The "three-decker" had been fulminating against the lazy poor.

"Work," he said. "They dread it like the fiend dreads holy water. Why do they hate the union? Simply because it is called the workhouse. They'll do anything and commit any crime to escape from work."

"And what about the lazy rich, Admiral?" asked Bertram. "D'you think they are any better? I'm sure you don't. I know them. They're haunted too — not by the fear of work, but by the fear of boredom. *Ennui* is to them what hunger and thirst are

to the poor. In fact, it is a worse thing, because hunger and thirst only torture the body; but *ennui* shows that the mind is diseased."

Admiral Champernowne listened politely and stroked his white-peaked beard. He was an owl-eyed, handsome old man.

"Didactic ass," whispered Patrick Spedding to his neighbour, the young musician. But she was interested. The Admiral, however, only bowed slightly across the table, turned to Lady Vane, and made it clear that he was not talking to Mr. Dangerfield.

"And what's the cure?" asked Loveday, seeing that nobody was prepared to discuss the subject.

Thereupon Bertram lowered his voice and turned to her.

"To be busy — if it's only mischief. Better be after something, even partridges or another man's wife, than after nothing at all. Life's exciting in the first case — according to the modest requirements of the sportsman or lover; in the second case, it's one yawn. Illusion is better than disillusion."

"Illusions keep the world going round," declared Loveday, and he admitted it.

"They are like the ferment that turns grape-juice into wine," he said. "But disillusion is a mere suspension of faculty, and leaves the soul with the dry rot."

Mr. Hoskyns sat on the other side of Loveday, and he pricked up his ears professionally.

"The thing is to seek truth — the truth that soars above illusion or disillusion," he declared. "My experience is that there are very few idle rich in the country. The landed people and those who under-

stand the true significance of that great saying, '*noblesse oblige*'— those who stand for the Throne and the Church and the State — are not lazy. There is no more energetic and self-sacrificing class in the kingdom."

Another artist was at the table, and by a sort of cryptic sense Bertram presently found it out.

Nelly Grayson, a handsome woman of eight-and-twenty, with a soprano voice and the perfect manner of a professional singer, was talking to Hastings Forbes, who sat upon her left.

"I'm too young to be a critic of myself," she told him. "I haven't known myself long enough. I muddle up my deeds and misdeeds with a light heart, and I really don't know what are the nice things I do and what are the horrid things."

"It is a great accomplishment not to criticise," he said. "I have always avoided criticising anybody. I praise indiscriminately, and not the least harm comes of it. Of course, you can't do that. Your art—"

"But artists have a perfect right to be idiots outside their art," she answered. "Ask Mr. Dangerfield. He'll know what I mean, if you don't."

She had been listening to Bertram, and now desired to get into touch with him.

"We're two defenceless things in this crowd," she thought. "We can back up each other."

Forbes sent the challenge across the table in a pause.

"Miss Grayson says that artists have a right to be idiots outside their art, and tells me that you will know what she means."

"Of course," he answered instantly. "Who doubts it? They owe it to themselves. And yet they're always criticised in a mixed crowd because they're not distractingly clever and brilliant and walking fireworks. That's because all the lay fools forget what an awful task-mistress art is. We, her slaves, are far too fully occupied with her commands to think of much else."

"The painters I have known certainly didn't show much intelligent interest in general affairs," declared Hastings Forbes, and Dangerfield was the first to laugh.

"I grant that. But why? They starve their brains and give the food to their eyes. If any of you could see what a real painter sees, your poor eyes would be blinded! When I hear a painter worthy of the name talking even sensibly about things that don't matter, I'm full of admiration for him."

"You talk sensibly," said Loveday.

"Very seldom," he answered. "Never when I'm painting."

After a pause the singer spoke across the table directly to Bertram.

"I tell Mr. Forbes that the artist is a deceiver always," she said. "But he is too gallant to believe it — of me."

"There's no denying that. He may be a gay deceiver — or a grim one; but it's all 'fake' underneath, though, of course, what comes out of it is eternal and the best that man can do. It's only the realists who pretend they are telling you the truth; and they know they're not — any more than

the black cloak and poison-bowl and dagger people, or the cheerful, silly, sanguine souls who bawl Christianity from the top of a beer-barrel and paint a rainbow on every black cloud. They are all lying together."

The singer spoke.

"Modern swell novelists are like the school of realistic painters," she said. "They are simply fact-hunters, sticking nature into the frame of their own sympathies."

"So they are," assented Bertram. "Oh, the monotony of these piles of lower middle-class facts! They make truth uglier than it is already. To see the world all lower middle-class is not to see its face. It's not to see its full face or its side face — only its — goodness knows what!"

Sir Ralegh had heard the words "lower middle-class," and thought it an opportunity to speak to Bertram.

"One must avoid class prejudice, however," he said. "We countrymen aren't always killing things, as you might guess. We really read a great deal, if it is only in the newspapers, and we begin to see clearly enough that they laugh loudest who laugh last."

Thereupon rose a stupid, boyish desire in Bertram to trouble this company. He resented Sir Ralegh's lecture.

Loveday spoke to him of pictures, and told him under her breath not to shock people. He bided his time, and drank — to banish a feeling of stuffiness and depression.

Unluckily he was challenged again, for Mr.

Hoskyns discussed growing unbelief, mourned the discovery of a freethinking carpenter within the secluded precincts of his own parish, and declared that rationalism was a very real peril.

"Rationalism is so brutal. It freezes the heart and makes men stones," he said.

"You're wrong," declared the painter. "Rationalism no more bars out the ideal than faith does. Look at the Greeks — the highest artistic ideal the world has seen — founded on pure reason. They didn't idealise out of their own heads — as we are told the man did who made the Apollo of Tenea — you remember, Miss Merton — but they idealised on what Nature offered them, as the man who made the Discobolus. That's the idealisation of reason — to go one better than Nature, not one better than some ideal not founded in Nature."

"I was speaking of religion, not art," answered the clergyman, shortly.

"I know; but it's just the same there. All supernaturalism is idealising on a wrong foundation. The rationalist tells you that religion must evolve along the line of reason, and that when we have done worshipping false gods and myths we shall begin to worship humanity, as the mightiest reality that existence on this earth can reveal to man."

Mr. Hoskyns started as though a serpent had stung him, then sighed and shook his head.

"You are young," he said. "You will live to learn what nonsense you are talking."

The elder turned away, and Bertram whispered under his breath to Loveday.

"One more snub and I'll burst!"

"You must give and take. You're not everybody," she replied, for his ear alone.

The thundercloud broke presently, and Miss Spedding felt the full charge of the explosion. But Dangerfield meant nothing; he had yet to learn the delicate art of conversation and the lightness of touch — like a dancing butterfly — that condones all allusions.

It happened that the table-talk fell on children, and Sir Ralegh, who cared for them, told of certain events at a school treat he had given in the past summer.

"Do you remember, Hoskyns," he asked, "how three little sisters were lost in the park, and discovered saying their prayers in the fern dell and asking God to find their mother?"

"When I was young," said Nina Spedding, "I never could get further than mamma in my prayers. God was too great an idea, so I made my idol of mamma and prayed to her."

"Rather like me," declared Bertram. "I must have dimly understood the mysteries of creation pretty early. When I was nine years old I used to call my mother 'the Rock of Ages.'"

"Why?" enquired Miss Spedding. "I don't see the point."

"Because she was cleft for me, I suppose," answered the painter. There fell a hush, for everybody had heard him. The silence was broken by Loveday, who openly laughed, and said, "How beautiful!" But none else saw any beauty whatever. Miss Spedding did not speak to her neighbour again. It was the last straw, and the young man

felt himself stifling in an atmosphere that he had never breathed till then.

"If that can hurt them, then let them be hurt," he said to Loveday. "I didn't know there were such people left."

The talk ranged over politics and sport. Loveday discussed golf with Hastings Forbes, and for a time Bertram was ignored. Then Miss Grayson addressed a question to him. Dessert had begun; Admiral Champernowne explained pear-growing to Lady Vane; while Lady Dangerfield discussed winter resorts with Sir Ralegh, who listened patiently.

"Which do you like to paint best, men or women?" asked the musician, meeting Dangerfield's troubled eyes. He thanked her with them before replying, then made answer:

"Women."

"That's quite wrong," she said. "You ought to say 'men.'"

"Why? Women, made right with long legs, are easily the most beautiful things in nature. Their outsides, I mean."

"Cold comfort for us! What sort d'you like best?"

"There are only two sorts. The women with shoulders as broad as their hips, and the women with hips broader than their shoulders. Both can be fine; but I like the Greek ideal best — the women with hips and shoulders of equal breadth. Which do you?"

Loveday caught her breath, and looked at Sir Ralegh.

He was perturbed, and signalling to his mother.

Miss Spedding indicated further distress. Nobody spoke, and the only sound was Patrick Spedding cracking a walnut.

"Miss Merton's shoulders are exactly—"

But Lady Vane had risen, and in a minute the men were alone.

Admiral Champernowne, as the oldest among them, began to preach to the painter.

"My dear young man," he said, "excuse my bluntness, but—but—you must really try to consider your subjects more carefully in mixed company. Women are women, and they shrink from the liberty—in fact, 'manners maketh man'—a thing the rising generation has forgotten."

"You may think us old-fashioned folk," said Sir Ralegh; "and so doubtless we are; but—Perhaps in Italy there is less self-restraint."

Dangerfield expressed no regret.

"This is jolly interesting," he answered. "I didn't know there were men and women left in the world who could have been staggered to hear an artist talk about hips and shoulders. A hunting girl, too!"

"It was more your voice than what you said," replied Spedding. "But my sister's a prude, though she does hunt."

"Nothing of the kind, Patrick," declared Sir Ralegh. "There's no woman less a prude than Nina. It was the strangeness. She got over the first outrage. Excuse the word, for it seemed an outrage to her. But the second—"

"You puzzle me beyond anything I've ever heard about," retorted Dangerfield. "I was going to say

that Miss Merton's hips and shoulders were exactly the same breadth, and that Miss Grayson's hips were broader than her shoulders. Would that have been wrong? It would have been true; but, of course, that's nothing."

"It would not merely have been wrong, but impossible," said Admiral Champernowne. "Even among ourselves the personal allusion is barred by a sort of instinct. We talk about the sex and permit ourselves an occasional joke — more shame to us — but we never indulge in personalities. There are men — thousands of them — who think nothing of it; but here we do not. Am I right, Ralegh?"

"It's bad form, you know," explained Patrick Spedding.

"Is it bad form to say that Miss Merton is the most beautifully shaped girl I have ever seen?" asked Bertram of Sir Ralegh.

"Yes, it is — frankly," replied the baronet. "I know there's no offence; but one simply does not say things like that to a man about his betrothed."

"For the same reason what you said to me some time ago was much to be condemned," declared the smouldering Hoskyns. "In a Christian company there are things that no delicate-minded person could say."

"Why not? You don't hesitate to condemn the infidel, as you call him. You and Admiral Champernowne were differing about missionaries without making Lady Vane unhappy. Then why should not you and I differ about myths without —?"

"The very word is offensive. Can't you see it?"

"Applied to Christianity in a Christian country

and among Christians, it is," declared Sir Ralegh.

"Christianity makes the world a prison, and death the end of the sentence. We are born in prison, and if we don't behave ourselves and get full marks, we shall only leave this gaol for another. Is it bad form to say that?"

"Worse than bad form — false and ignorant and abominable," replied the clergyman. "Your conscience must impugn such evil words."

The other shook his head.

"I shall never see or shock any of you again," he said, "so I can speak. Try and understand that you've met an artist — perhaps for the first and last time in your lives. An artist has nothing to do with bad form or good form, as you understand it. He must think free if he is to think clean. Your conventions foul the clean thinker's thoughts and make — It's this way: most men's minds are like frosted glass: they take no clear image and only reflect dimly the meaning of all around them; but the artist's mind should be bright silver polished ten thousand times, so that the image it receives is clear and perfect. Yet every mirror is cracked and the little network of invisible flaws — that is the man. That decides the image he reflects, and gives the distinction. But for that you would have perfect art — an impossibility. There are far better things in art than perfection. But that's how I see, and you men — simply foundering in superstitions and obsolescent conventions — have no right whatever to feel doubtful about my vision. You are suspicious of me; you think I stand for a new order of ideas. I do. Take conscience. Mr. Hoskyns asked me if

my conscience didn't do something or other. No doubt he would talk of a 'bad conscience.' But doesn't he know that a bad conscience is like a tropical plant? It can only live on certain stuffy levels, with remorse and piety and pity and a lot of other weeds. Carry your bad conscience up a mountain and you'll kill it — with pure air. Take your muddled metaphysics and old creeds and mummeries of mind into the pure air of reason, and they'll curl up and die."

"You are saying things that strike at the very roots of society and are subversive of all high thinking and fine living," declared Sir Ralegh; but the youth denied it.

"What I would have makes for fine living," he replied. "Your views and opinions and prejudices make for fine dying. Your life must express your values. Your outward and visible life may not, because so much must come between a landlord and his ideals; but your inward and spiritual life *must* express your values, if you have any power of thinking at all. And the nearer you can get the outward and the inward into harmony, the better will life be from your point of view. But your idea of harmony would be stagnation: science sat upon and the poor kept ignorant, and the Church and State —"

"Don't speak for me," answered the other. "Harmony I certainly want, and harmony will come in due time, as the classes grow more in tune with each other and the unrest and surge of these days begin to settle down; but since you speak so openly, we may also; and I voice all at this table when I tell you that through Christian religion, and

not through pagan art, will the millennium come in God's good time."

"Life is not harmony; it is fighting," declared the Admiral. "It always was, and always will be. You're a fighter yourself, Mr. Dangerfield, and you come of a fighting stock, and you're fighting a losing battle for the moment. However, the blood in your veins may save you when it runs a little slower and a little cooler."

But Bertram was not abashed. He talked on while conversation ranged hither and thither. In almost every case he was alone, save when Hastings Forbes, with understanding widened by his recent personal experience, concurred. At last, however, Bertram and Sir Ralegh found themselves absolutely at one, and the artist applauded very heartily.

"To be a sportsman is nothing," declared his host; "but to be sporting is everything; and that's what no one understands but an Englishman — and not all of them."

"It is the grand thing that we are teaching the French — in exchange for art," answered Bertram. "The idea is entirely foreign to the Latin mind, but they are grasping it — through the channels of sport."

He pleased them, too, with another sentiment. They spoke of politics, and asked him what he was.

"I stand for Tinocracy," he said. "For the pursuit of honour and a constitution based upon the principle that the honour of the State must be paramount and outweigh every other consideration. What honour can any party government pay to the State? The house divided against itself falleth; the

principle of party government is a pure anachronism to-day, though, of course, nobody sees it. I suppose the house will go on dividing against itself a little longer, and then a coalition will open the eyes of England, and we shall all see what hopeless fools we've been, wasting precious time under our two-penny-halfpenny party flags. It couldn't be helped — I know that; but it will be helped pretty soon."

"After such a great and glorious prophecy, let us join the ladies," suggested Sir Ralegh.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PAINTER DEPARTS

"I WISH the picture to be shown at next year's exhibition of the Royal Academy," said Lady Dangerfield. "It is abominably like me; and it will come as a great surprise to some of my dearest friends, who think I have been dead for years."

Bertram agreed.

"It shall go there. It's all right in its way. You're a grand sitter, Aunt Constance; and so is 'Little Billee.'"

He referred to the macaw.

Friends applauded, and Sir Ralegh declared that he should have thought it impossible for the same man to paint the portrait and the landscape of the North Wood. The latter had been given to him, and a few days before Dangerfield departed, he heard the master of Vanestowe upon the subject.

"To be frank, at first I did not like the picture," he confessed. "The trees all seemed to be a hopeless jumble of colours. It was as though you had rubbed your palette over the canvas. But now it's in the billiard-room, in the light you chose for it, and we all agree that it grows upon us. It certainly makes other things look tame."

"Nature is not rendered by copying her. And you must remember that a painter of any class has

eyes exactly a million times subtler and keener and better educated than a man who doesn't paint. No sane man ought to want pictures on his walls that only show him what he can see for himself, any more than he wants books in his library that only contain what he knows already."

So argued Bertram.

"All the same," declared Loveday, when they had left her lover, "Ralegh really likes — you know the artists — men who see just what he sees and no more."

"They are painters, not artists," corrected Dangerfield, "and if you once break away from them to the new school, you'll never go back. It makes me savage to hear laymen criticising. '*We* don't see that, and *we* don't see this; as if it mattered a farthing damn to anybody on earth what they saw or what they didn't. They *can't* see. A stockbroker or an art critic drives across the Campagna in his motor-car, after too much lunch, and then has the unspeakable insolence to tell me he didn't see what I saw there. Let such a man go to Dick, Tom, or Harry, who does see exactly what he does — no more, no less. Let him buy his pictures from them — the men who turn out their rubbish by the gross and flood the provinces with it."

"Take care!" warned Loveday. "Remember the drawing-room at Vanestowe!"

She had driven Bertram in her own pony-carriage to places that she cared about, and had enjoyed serious conversations with him. But she could not convince him that his performance at the dinner-party was egregious.

"If I surprised them, I'm sure they surprised me still more," he told her. "They revive the dead Victorian past and all the prehistoric ideas that were thrust upon me—"

"When you were young?"

"Yes. But they've been burned away in the crucibles of Art long ago. I came down from Oxford with a whole cartload of trashy opinions. My mind was full of obsolete monsters that couldn't exist outside the atmosphere of the university. The humanists killed them off like flies. But here they are—all alive and kicking; and the mischief is that these human vegetables are so kind and courteous. My heart goes out to them. I should like to come to them as a prophet—and heal them."

"So good of you; but I'm afraid—"

"Yes, I know. They think I'm a bounder. But I'm not; I'm merely Greek. You see, some people stagnate and some petrify. The first sort have squashy minds, and turn into great fungi—mere rotting sponges; and the other sort are impervious to every idea—just lumps of fossilised opinions that nothing can split or shatter. They're both horrid, and they're both dead, and they're both everywhere apparently."

"I'm sure they were quite alive when they talked about you behind your back," she said. "Nina called you 'an outsider.'"

"I am—from her point of view. By the way, Sir Ralegh likes her awfully. Did you know that? She's one of the fossil-minded sort, and her brother's the other kind—squashy. It's just this, Miss Merton—I'm speaking now of these country house peo-

ple. The criterion of existence is consciousness, if you are going to claim for yourself that you are a human being at all. Isn't it?"

"Of course."

"Well, honestly, these fellow creatures of yours don't know they're born. That's the solemn truth about them. Therefore, being unconscious, they don't exist as men and women at all. They are of the company of cattle and turnips. It follows that what they think about me doesn't matter in the least. But what I think about them is most important — if they can be made to understand it. Let me once open their eyes to the fact that they are alive in a world that stretches far beyond Chudleigh; let me sting them into consciousness, and they will rise from their night and cease to be as the beasts and roots that perish."

"Then you'll have created them and they'll be born again," she said.

"Like God, I shall have made them with a word. The turnip suddenly has become a reasonable human crèature!"

"And the first thing it ought to do would be to kneel down and thank you, I suppose. But, instead, you merely made them angry."

"'Merely!' Why, that's a miracle in itself. You try to make a turnip angry, and see how difficult it is."

"Lady Vane thinks that you are a very dangerous acquaintance for me, and will be glad when you are gone."

"Not as glad as I shall be to go. It's archaic and demoralising here. And you mean to be in it

all your life! Yet you don't look like it, or think like it, or talk like it."

"Yes, I do, when I'm out of your sight."

"Then you're as big a humbug as any of them," he assured Loveday. "My aunt is the only honest woman among them, and they all hate her."

"I don't. I think the world of her."

He considered.

"Doesn't that show you're a free spirit really, though you pretend you are not?"

She often caught him regarding her with great intentness, but never with much satisfaction. He adopted rather a hortatory tone, and yet sometimes, when she was weary of him, flashed out with a gleam and touched her very being by ineffable little glimpses of a tenderness and subtlety that she knew not belonged to man. He interested her a great deal, and she wasted time in vain efforts to reconcile the apparent contradictions of his nature. To-day he would praise a classical education above all things and pour scorn on the Philistine attitude of the lower classes that despised academic culture; to-morrow he would raze Oxford to the ground and declare that it was dead and that no good thing could evermore come out of it. She challenged him, and he explained that he dealt in ideas and entertained no opinions.

"The moment I begin to repeat anything, distrust me," he said. "That shows I am growing obsessed by it, and am no longer impartial. I have these obsessions, but they pass. Sir Ralegh warned me against prejudice when I was hating the lower mid-

dle-class. He was quite right. Class prejudice means that sympathy is dead, and the artist who kills one strand of his sympathy is curtailing his power."

They talked of her art, and she showed him a great many water-colour drawings. The most satisfactory adorned the smoking-room at Vanestowe; but these he little liked.

"The things you have left unfinished are the best," he said; "because they have no such flagrant faults as the completed drawings. But they are all bad, and argue natural ineptitude for this medium and no feeling whatever for selection. You don't get at the meaning of these local sanctities you have tried to paint. I should chuck it and employ time more usefully. You observe a lot of rubbish that does not matter, and stick in a lot of the things observed without the least consideration whether you need them or not. The difference between observation and imagination I told you before. It's the difference between a woodman's catalogue and a burgeoning tree. I'll write to you when I'm gone — about points you've raised. Shall I?"

"What's the good?" she asked. "Why should you waste your time writing to somebody who isn't an artist?"

"You can be an artist without being a painter," he answered. "I believe you are an artist of some sort. You have enthusiasm. You only want to learn the meaning of the word. But come to Firenze — I implore you for your soul's sake — and perhaps there you will find why you were sent into this ripping world, and the real things you are going to do to make it still lovelier and happier."

When he had gone, Loveday found the days greyer by several shades. Even the autumn colours were less brilliant; and life threatened to become monotonous. She fell back on her lover; but he, too, had taken a shade of new colour. She saw him the clearer for this interlude; and she told herself that she liked him the better.

CHAPTER IX

ANOTHER LETTER

"FIRENZE.

"DEAR MISS MERTON,—

"I am home again after my wonderful adventures. It is cold, but not so cold as England's sympathy for art. I've been washing my soul in beautiful things and taking a tonic for my colour sense — numbed by English light.

"Now for two big subjects: Item. You asked me if I was a Socialist, and were a good deal surprised to find that I was not. Item. You said, 'What do you mean by that *exactly?*' when I told you that art was my god.

"First I'll tell you why I don't believe in Socialism and the ideal of the herd. Because when the Almighty said, 'Let there be light,' He implied the contradiction: 'Let there be shadow.'

"Matter implies shadow, and never a sun was born from some immensity of fire without begetting its own family of shadow-casting children. First, the great suns endure making; then they begin to create on their own account and bear their babies out of their own fiery bodies. They make homes for life, and they know that, as soon as a planet is ready, Alma Venus will surely find it and bless it and endow it. By the way, Bergson has a good idea, which

Ruskin had before him: that the materials of life's choice on this earth are not of necessity the materials she uses elsewhere. She selects and takes out of matter what pleases her best and best fits her moods and needs. You and I are marble creatures — as much marble as Michael Angelo's 'Dawn,' which I worshipped this morning. Our scaffoldings and skeletons are made of lime — very well in its way, and we must be thankful that it isn't worse; but how much better it must be on some of the swagger worlds! Perhaps in the children of Sirius, or Aldebaran, or Aquilla conscious existence is linked to matter that flashes like a flame hither and thither, and conquers time and space in a fashion that we marble men and women can only dream about. One of my very greatest ideas is a radium-built people, who live for æons and have garnered about them an inconceivable science and culture and wisdom. It is the fashion to sneer at that good word 'materialist,' but I know not why; for once concede that the manifestations of matter are innumerable, and we may find it embrace the matrix of the spirit also, as I think it must. Would not a radium-built people be spirits to us? Would not our most ascetic heroes and martyrs be mere well-meaning bath-buns compared to such a people?

"But this is a digression. I was going to say that you can't have light without shade, and virtue without vice, and courage without cowardice, and death without life. Yet these old maids of both sexes, called Socialists, want life to be a plain, and would level all mountains because so many people have weak hearts, or corns on their toes, and are not equal

to climbing mountains. If you tell them that you cannot have eagles without mountains, and that the plain ideal only produces partridges and rooks, these insufferable cravens will answer that the world wants partridges but can get on perfectly without eagles. They would as soon see a partridge on their flags as an eagle — indeed, sooner. A sheep rampant should be their sign.

"Socialism demands light without shade, or rather eternal twilight; and yet, if you will believe it, there are famous artists — eagles — who call themselves Socialists! An artist crying for equality! Is it conceivable? Happily equality is an impossibility and contrary to Nature. We can better Nature at the start; we can fight to lessen her outrageous handicaps; we can toil for the unborn, which she does not, in any rational sense; we can see all men start fair, but we cannot help all to win; for that would be to have light without shadow, and life without death. We know that a man miserably born will be likely miserably to die, and we can consider the hypothetic failure, and even save him the necessity of coming into the world; but once arrived, we cannot promise him victory, or stand between him and defeat. And I hope we never shall, for anything more mean and paltry than a world reduced to that dead norm, with passion, danger, difficulty, and terror banished from it, and a man's highest power to be at the mercy of the busy, parochial-minded trash that serves on committees and councils and parliaments, and calls itself the State — ugh!

"Of course, it will happen some day. We shall try this monstrous thing and make a rabbit-warren

of Europe; and then men will discover again that goodness is impossible without badness, and content without discontent; and they will incidentally find that it is better to have poverty and wealth than neither, and beauty and ugliness than neither, and life and death than mere duration. And they will find that it is better to live in the grand manner if you are a grand man, than exist with the community of the sheep, or harbour with the coneys in mean holes and burrows. We shall try Socialism, and then an Eagle will screech again suddenly, and the herd will run as usual to shoot it; but they won't shoot, for the screech will come like the voice of a new evangel to that slave race. It will turn on its smug, blood-sucking army of officials and sacrifice them to the Eagle.

"And I tell you, Miss Merton, that Art is going to be the grand enemy of Socialism, and will come into her own, perhaps a century hence, when Rationalism has made good its humanist claims. People seem to think that art and rationalism are terms mutually exclusive, and yet was it not from the Golden Age of pure reason that Art's mightiest manifestations are chronicled? I grant that the inspiration was victorious war; but let evolution do her perfect work, and then shall come a time when inspiration springs from victorious peace. The new paths will cross the old some day, and, given that terrific goad to creative instinct, a hurricane of mighty art will sweep over the earth. Yes, we shall have a victory won by pure reason — a victory that will announce to civilisation that its quarrels must no more be settled by the death of innocent men. Then,

against war's laurels, shall blossom and fruit the olive of peace, in whose sweet shade a new and stupendous re-birth of art will flourish.

"There are unutterable splendours waiting in the mines of the human intellect, as in the marble quarries of Carrara — wondrous, prisoned spirits of poetry biding their time for happiness to drag them forth; and in the triumph of Peace, our somnolent, senile world will again grow young and renew the blood in its veins with the joy of youth. You and I can feel the joy of youth in our very selves, because we are so gloriously young, and it belongs to us to feel it, for there is no blemish on our marble yet; our minds move swiftly and our bodies obediently leap to minister to our will; we work, and are never weary; we eat, and are always hungry. Time seems an eternity when we look ahead and perceive how much belongs to us — to use in enjoyment and making of beautiful things; but the poor old world is like Æson, and cries out for a Medea to renew its youth with enchantment, cure its aches and pains and heal its sickness, so that it shall be sane and whole and sweet again.

"Now you see why Art is my God; and I worship her, though she is not on the throne of the earth at present, or likely to be yet awhile.

"Bruno says a great thing — that Art is outside matter and Nature inside matter.

"What we call Nature seems to me a property of matter, and everything that can happen to matter is natural — or it couldn't happen. Everything, therefore, that has ever happened or will ever happen is the result of a dynamical force, working from

inside matter — the force we call Nature. But how about Art? Here is a terrific force working on Nature from the outside. Does Art do anything to Nature, or is she merely a sort of plucking and choosing and re-sorting and re-stating of Nature's boundless material? Are we merely rag-pickers or bower-birds — we that make things?

"A great many who profess and call themselves artists are no more than that; but the live creator is greater than Nature, because he can make greater things than she can. That's the point. The criterion of Ruler Art is whether it follows or leads Nature. Nature makes a woman; Praxiteles carves the Cnidian Venus. Nature makes horses and men; Pheidias creates the frieze of the Parthenon or the groups of the pediment. Nature plans the human heart in all its relations; Shakespeare writes *Hamlet* and *Lear*. Nature has managed the skylark and the nightingale and the grey bird, the thunder and the wind, the noise of many waters, the song of the rain and the drip of leaves; Beethoven creates the Fifth Symphony and makes a cosmos of music out of a chaos of all natural melody. Ruler Art surely embraces the highest achievements of the human mind; and the mind, being Nature's work, it seems that Nature herself has given us the weapon to be greater than she is — the weapon with which to work from outside in a way that she cannot. Wasn't that sporting of her?

"Art, then, is my God — so far as I can see, the only possible god free from superstition and nonsense, the god that knocks Nature into shape and shows her the infinite glories and possibilities that belong to her.

"And now I will leave you in peace till you come to Firenze. Then you will find that you have not yet begun to live, but merely existed, as a lovely and radiant creature whose powers of feeling and enjoying are yet unknown, and whose power to make kindred spirits feel and enjoy are also hidden.

"I hope you will let me take trouble for you here, because such trouble would give delight to the painter,

"BERTRAM DANGERFIELD."

CHAPTER X

THE MIND OF THE BARONET

Miss Spedding and Sir Ralegh rode together to hounds. The pack was ahead with huntsman and "whipper-in," and they jogged behind. It was a bright, fresh morning, and at Haldon edge every breath of the wind brought a shower of leaves from the fringe of the woods. The man and woman were happy with anticipation. They rejoiced in their talk of sport, and laughed together as they trotted forward. He wore a scarlet coat, and his horn was tucked into the breast of it.

"Do you remember that tricky run early last season?" he asked. "The one under Hey Tor Rocks."

"Rather! How he went round and round! My heart sank when he turned the second time, for I knew he was going to the quarries."

"I never much mind losing a very good fox. It's the survival of the fittest, as the scientists say. The Dartmoor foxes can't be beaten in England for pace."

"There'll be a big meet, I hope, on such a perfect morning."

"I hope so."

"Is Loveday coming?"

"No. She's got a painting fit, and is very busy about a picture of the pond."

"She's almost given up riding."

Sir Ralegh's face clouded.

"It's not a pleasure to her, and one hasn't the heart to press it, Nina."

"Of course not. But what a pity! She does look so perfectly lovely on horseback."

"It isn't nerve or anything like that. A very fine nerve. It's just distaste. She gets no pleasure from it."

"But you do?"

"Yes — I love to see her out, of course. But one cannot bother her. I wish that — however. Of course, art is a very fine thing in its way. Only there's a danger of letting it rather dominate one apparently."

"I expect Mr. Dangerfield fired her. They are so one-sided, these 'artey' people. They seem to think that nothing else matters."

"That's just what they do think. They ruin their perspective of life and get everything distorted. Dangerfield made no pretence about it. He said that if the world was ever to be saved from itself, Art would save it. He's an atheist; but as a man of the world and one who has thought — who has had to think — I am not shocked by the opinions and prejudices of other people. We discussed these matters quite temperately. He allows himself rather more forcible language than we do — the artistic exaggeration, I suppose. No doubt it is picturesque in a way. But when it comes to dispassionate argument, the more restrained the language the better."

"Of course. He was always in extremes."

"Still, one must remember his age and the blood

in his veins. He will throw over all this nonsense presently. A Dangerfield an atheist! It's absurd on the face of it."

"Lady Dangerfield is rather queer in her ideas, isn't she?"

"She's not a Dangerfield."

"What about Florence? Loveday seems bent upon it."

"She is; and, of course, if she wishes to go to Italy, she must do so. One can't dictate to a grown woman, and nowadays the sex — well, there's a freedom and liberty that seems perfectly right and reasonable enough to me; though to my mother, the liberty claimed by the modern girl is very distasteful."

"I know she feels like that. I'm afraid we shock her, Ralegh."

"You never do. I can honestly say that you conform to all her standards very faithfully. You hunt, it is true; but then you are what she calls a 'sweet woman — a womanly woman.' You visit the poor — you take them things, and talk to them and cheer them. You go to church; you are sound in your political opinions, and hate women's movements, and don't want the vote, and wouldn't go to a woman doctor for the world."

"Very old-fashioned, in fact."

"I suppose you are, Nina. Now my Loveday, as you know, without meaning it an atom, does tread very hard on the mother's toes."

"She's so inquiring and wonderful — Loveday. She's so interested in simply everything. I think it is so original of her to be so keen about the world

outside. To me, my own world seems so full that I never seem to want to know anything about the world outside — except, of course, politics."

"I know. Really, that's a very sound standpoint, in my opinion. To do the thing nearest one's hand, and to do it well. What a different world if we all were content with that! But Loveday's mind is undoubedly large. I shouldn't call it by any means a stable mind, and it's defiant of law and order, as young minds often will be."

"She must come to see everything with your eyes presently."

"I hope so. That seems the natural and happy plan, doesn't it? One wouldn't wish one's wife to be a mere echo of oneself, of course. I respect originality — yes, it is very right to have one's own point of view and thresh out the problems that arise. But it seems to me that there can only be one possible answer to so many of these problems if you happen to be a gentleman, and think and feel as a gentleman, and recognise the grave responsibilities of conscience under which a gentleman must labour."

"Yes, indeed, that is so. Loveday goes quite deeply into things. Of course, not really *deeply* — I know that. But she seems to — to me."

"'Not really deeply,' Nina? How should she? What can she possibly know of the great causes and differences that convulse the world to-day? This nonsense about art being a serious factor in the amelioration of the human lot — for instance. A moment's examination reduces the thing to a joke, of course. Are you going to make hungry people happier by hanging pictures on their walls? Are you

going to elevate the brutal ignorance of unskilled labour with statues and music? Loveday is rather a dreamer, and there is the danger that this inclination to dream may grow upon her. But 'Life is real: life is earnest,' as somebody says. However, she'll go to Italy in the spring, and I hope that it will enlarge her mind, and so on."

"If she has a real good dose of pictures and things, she may begin to understand the significance of it all, and put art in its proper place," suggested Nina.

"That might very likely happen. For you know how sensible she is."

"Yes, indeed she is — and so brilliant. And then she would come back better pleased with England and our solid ways."

"She might — at any rate, I should hope and expect it. There's a backbone about our manners and customs. They are founded on fine traditions. We are an old and a wise nation. We may be feared; we may not be universally loved; but the world respects us. The world respects achievement. Now in Italy, though I have never been there, things must be utterly different. She cannot fail to see a good deal that will make her long to be home again, don't you think so?"

"I'm sure she will, Ralegh — any real English girl, like Loveday, must."

"There's a funny, unconscious sympathy with other nations in Loveday — a sort of defiant praising what she does not know at the expense of what she does know."

"Pure 'cussedness'!"

"I think I am a tolerant man, Nina."

"You are indeed. You can make allowances for everything and everybody. I often wonder."

"I was trained to it from childhood. My father was greater than I. He had a breadth and a power of sympathy and a gift to see another person's point of view that was truly astounding. The result was that every man, woman, and child, high and low alike, loved him."

"You are doing just the same."

"Jolly of you to say so. I wish I was. But, without prejudice, it would surely be childish and illogical in the highest degree to suppose that a country like Italy *could* be better in any way than ours. Or half as good. Its constitution, and manners, and customs, and laws, and so on — all still chaotic. So we, who are fortunate enough to live under an ideal constitution, must reserve our judgment. Indeed, we had better look at home, for our constitution is in deadly peril, since a fatuous proletariat has trusted England's fate to demagogues."

"She's always so splendidly enthusiastic — Loveday, I mean."

"I know, and enthusiasm is a very fine thing; but cool judgment is better. I hope, if she does go to Italy in a proper spirit, that she'll see the truth about it, and won't put the superficial beauties of nature before the realities that underlie the Italian race and character. Mountains and lakes are to the country just what pictures and statues are to its old palaces and villas. D'you follow me?"

"Yes, I quite see."

"All ornaments and superficialities. The greatness of a nation does not depend upon accidents of

that sort. I should be inclined to look rather to its products for its character. That may seem far-fetched to you, Nina?"

"Not at all. You have thought these things out, Ralegh. You are never far-fetched."

"Yes, there's something in it. And a nation whose products are wine and silk. Don't you think, in a sort of way, it's summed up in that?"

"I do — I quite see. They are light things. The world could get on perfectly well without wine and silk."

"Exactly. Besides — Italian wines — there you are in a nutshell. Italian wines! What are they? They simply don't exist when one thinks of the serious vintages of the world."

"Of course they don't."

"I wouldn't say, mind you, that everything Latin is in decadence — I don't go so far as that. But I do believe there is a screw loose in Italy. I don't find a balanced judgment, a power of arguing from cause to effect. They are an unstable people — emotional, no doubt — and sentimental. Look at their last war — hysterical greed!"

"You are so clever. You always go into things so deeply."

"No, I can't claim that. My danger is to be insular. I fight against it. But one gathers the trend of European ambition pretty correctly if one reads *The Times*, as I do, year after year. So I warn Loveday to keep an open mind, and not to rush to extremes or welcome novelty too quickly — just because it is novel. That's rather fundamental in a way. You may say she's summed up in that. She

always welcomes novelty; while I always distrust it. I think my way's the wiser, however."

"I'm sure it's the wiser. I expect she will come home again very thankfully."

"I should hope so. In fact, my mother, to my surprise, rather advocates the visit. She thinks it will get this 'poison,' as she calls it, out of Loveday's blood. 'Let her have her fill of art, and then we'll hope that she'll come back sick of it and thankful to get into the pure air of her English home again.' That's what my mother says — just, in fact, what you say. One sees her argument."

"How long will Loveday be away?"

"I suppose six weeks. The Neill-Savages, in the course of their orbits, are to be at Florence next spring. And she will travel with them and stop with them. That will work well, I hope. The ladies know the world, and can exercise some control and supervision."

"D'you think so — over Loveday?"

"Why not?"

"There are sure to be acquaintances of yours in Italy at that time too?"

"Sure to be. Indeed, there are friends of my father who live at Florence. She will take out a good many introductions."

"Mr. Dangerfield would know everybody."

"I should doubt it. The artists and advanced thinkers — as they call themselves — he may know; but not, as you say, 'everybody.' He is a case of a man who has let his native instincts rather suffer under the rank growths of Italy. There is a laxness and indifference to bed-rock principles. In one

thing, however, I respect him. He is not afraid of work, and though we may feel that art is far from being the greatest thing that a strong man should employ his full strength and power upon, yet, since he has chosen it, I do admire his power of work. No doubt it has taken many years of immense labour to gain his facility with the brush."

"He has made rather a convert of you, I see," she said.

"In a way, yes. There's individuality and strength about him. He lacks tact and taste and reserve and reverence. One must admit that he forgot himself sometimes. But there's something there. It's the Dangerfield in him. I'm a student of character, and felt a personality — a nature that may do harm in the world, or may do good, but will certainly do one or the other."

"He wasn't colourless."

"Far from it — distinctly interesting."

"What did Loveday think of him?"

"I should say that she was rather dazzled."

"Naturally. She loves art, and here was a real live artist, and so good-looking."

"I suppose he is good-looking, and he's certainly alive. The sort of man to influence a young woman without any logical faculty."

Nina considered.

"She won't see much of him in Florence?"

"Oh, no. She'll find several of my mother's old friends there, and will have certain social duties — invitations to accept, and so on. The idea is a few weeks at Florence, and then the Swiss or Italian Lakes on the way home."

"Lucky girl!"

"Yet I'm sure you don't envy her?"

"I do and I don't. One ought to go abroad; it enlarges the mind and corrects the perspective, and all that sort of thing. And yet I cannot say truly that I'm very wildly anxious to go. There's another side. I've known clever women get very unsettled and out of conceit with England after being away."

"Out of conceit with England, Nina!"

"It sounds ridiculous; but it does happen."

"That would surely argue rather an unbalanced mind?"

"No doubt it would. As for me, I love my home and my simple pleasures and my friends. I think I should be very much lost in Italy and thankful to scamper home again — though they do hunt foxes on the Campagna at Rome."

"It seems rather absurd to think of Italians hunting foxes, doesn't it? In fact, anybody but English men and women."

"It does somehow — I don't know why. And yet they say that Italian horsemen are the best in the world."

"Who say so? One of those stupid sayings without a particle of truth in it, be sure. No, no, they may paint pictures and sing songs better than we can, but ride to hounds! We mustn't be asked to believe that. If there is one sport, and that the king of sports, where we can claim precedence before the world, it is fox-hunting."

"Of course it is."

"I'd far rather that a woman were insular and

wrapped up in her country and home, than cosmopolitan and given over to general interests and general indifference. It weakens intensity and conviction to roam about too much — for a woman, I mean. Patriotism and enthusiasm have made England what it is, and if the spread of education and increased facilities of travel are going to weaken our patriotism and enthusiasm for our country and its fame, then I see real danger in them."

"I know some people who say that if the Germans are strong enough to beat us, the sooner they do so the better. They think we've 'bitten off more than we can chew'— it was their expression — and openly declare that they will not be a bit sorry to see us reminded that we're not everybody."

He frowned, and even flushed.

"It makes me smart to hear of such treachery to our traditions and ideals. I'm sorry you know such people, Nina."

"So am I, and I don't encourage them, I assure you. They are Little Englanders, and when I told them that they were, they denied it, and answered that if I had travelled round the world three times and studied the ways of it as thoroughly as they had, I should realise that even England has no special dispensation to differ in its history from the history of all other conquering nations that have risen and fallen. In fact, they thought that England was on the 'down-grade'— another of their expressions, not mine."

"A vulgar phrase and only found in the mouths of vulgar people," he assured her. "'Down-grade'! How richly coarse and offensive when one

is dealing with the sacred history of one's own nation!"

"They don't see anything sacred about it."

"So much the worse for them. There is a sort of mind that welcomes these new expressions. They are everywhere. Our legislators do not hesitate to use them. In fact, as a body, the speakers in the House of Commons to-day merely reflect the vulgar diction of the halfpenny Press. We hear and read nothing large and rounded and dignified as in the days of the — the older men — your Brights and Gladstones and Pitts. Bourgeois brawling, passages of personalities, loss of temper, violence, flagrant offence, rough and tumble speech, and the colloquialisms of the common people — that is a debate. They cry out 'Rats!' across the floor of the House, and other things one thought only grooms and stable-boys say. The old, stately rhetoric and studious courtesy to an opponent, the rounded period, the oratory, the scholarly quotation, the brilliance and passion of conviction — all are gone. Indeed, there is no conviction. Instead, we have a cynical crowd, all playing a game, and all knowing that they are playing a game. The flagrant bargains, the buying and selling of titles; 'the gulf fixed between ideal legislation and practical politics,' as a Cabinet Minister once wrote to me — it is all very sad and significant to a serious-minded man like myself."

She gazed upon him with admiration and regard.

"I suppose nothing would make you stand for Parliament?"

"Nothing but my country," he answered. "If I thought that I could serve my country and

advance its welfare by seeking a seat, I should do so, as a duty — a painful duty too. But I can't see that any good purpose would be served by it. I should feel like a fish out of water, to begin with. And, honestly, I believe I am doing more good here among my own people, helping them to see right and guarding them as far as I can from the impositions of government, than I should be doing in Parliament. They know I have no axe to grind and stand simply for what I think honourable and just. But I shall soon be a voice shouting in the wilderness. Our time is past, and the nation will take from us landholders the soil that our forefathers won from their sovereigns as the reward of heroism and sacrifice and fidelity. Three fine words, but this generation thinks that it knows three finer ones — Liberty, Fraternity, Equality. Liberty — an impossibility, because contrary to nature; fraternity — an impossibility, for how can different orders of men with opposite interests fraternise? Equality — an impossibility, because every sense of what is fine and distinguished and masterful in the higher man cries out against it. The proletariat is driving gentlemen out of Parliament altogether, as it is driving them off the parish councils and other bodies. It offers wages — a prostitution. No, gentlemen are not wanted; they stand in the way. Gentlemen will be as extinct as the dodo very soon!"

"There you and Mr. Dangerfield agree, then, for he hated Socialism," she said.

"So much the better. With all his errors of opinion and faulty ideas, no doubt largely gleaned in foreign countries, the man is a Dangerfield, as I

said before. The blood in his veins must stand between him and anarchy, though unfortunately it hasn't prevented him from developing into a bounder. It shows how environment may conquer heredity. Myself I always consider environment the more important in some ways."

"You are so clever — you take such large, temperate views," she said, and he was gratified.

"Not clever — not clever — merely logical. It is the fashion to sneer at a university education nowadays; but if it were more general, England would soon be better equipped to speak to her enemies in the gate. For then many more men would think as I do."

"Here we are!" cried Nina.

His face fell as he looked ahead.

"A poor field, I'm afraid," he said.

CHAPTER XI

LADY DANGERFIELD TO LOVEDAY

"TORQUAY.

"DEAR LOVEDAY,—

"Here I am in the old villa aften ten years' absence! Torquay is not what it was, I regret to find. There is a great falling off indeed, and 'we' are no longer the centre of creation. The authorities care nothing whatever for us rich old bluebottles now. The villa people may go hang, for they seek quite a different sort of clients, and our good has become a matter of sublime indifference. To entertain the cheap tripper from the far North has become Torquay's first joy and pride. There is a tram-line, upon which one of my horses fell two days ago. It was 'Tommy,' a creature of highly sensitive temperament. His spirit failed him after the horrid adventure, and he could not immediately rise. I sent into a shop, which was happily at hand, and purchased a pair of thick blankets, for the day was exceedingly cold. We covered 'Tommy' and ministered to him, and, in the course of half an hour, the poor fellow was able to make an effort and get on his feet. One had the negative pleasure of suspending the traffic until he did so. This is an example of the new clashing with the old. We have piers, pavilions, and so forth — all for a sort of people who

did not know that Torquay existed ten years ago. But they have found it, and been welcomed by their kind here; and the poor goose that lays the golden eggs is having her throat cut very quickly. Perhaps the townspeople will regret us when we are all in our marble tombs; perhaps they won't. No doubt the same thing is happening everywhere else. The end is in sight for us — we lilies of the field who have neither toiled nor spun.

"When you reach my age, you feel that the best of all possible worlds belonged to your youth, and have little desire left for novelty. It is such a vulgar era — this electric one. People don't merely do vulgar things, and build vulgar houses, and enjoy vulgar pleasures, and even pray vulgar prayers and hold vulgar religious services, and so forth; but they think vulgar thoughts. My nephew is right there: the minds of the rising generation are ugly inside.

"Take our sex. I have been meeting Suffragettes here at luncheon. Their attitude is really most puzzling. Woman is so great and small in a breath. She will save a man's life to-day; and to-morrow she'll remind him of the debt — like some maid servant who has lent you sixpence, and is frightened to death that you'll forget the loan.

"The man-hating phrase has been thrust under my nose a good deal here — here, of all places! A confirmed man-hater drank tea with me yesterday. Her attitude was not the result of experience, but merely principle. It is a germ in the air that gets hold of women and produces an inverted instinct.

"I alluded to the way that certain brave men behaved when a great ship sank — you remember —

and I asked the woman what she thought of it. 'Why, there was nothing to think of,' she answered. 'I didn't bother about it. We all know that men obey their own laws; and one is that the port light of a ship is red; and another is that the starboard light is green; and a third is that, in case of wreck, the women and children go into the boats first.' An inverted instinct, you see — a bias that gets the better of everything that makes a woman worth while — to a man. But the truth is that they don't want to be worth while to a man; because men have ceased to be worth while to them.

"It is wrong. A woman who can't feel one little emotion over self-sacrifice, if it's male self-sacrifice, or heroism, if it's male heroism, is really suffering from poison; and she is better isolated, before she infects any more of her sisters. One doesn't ask us to be logical, or just, or reasonable, or temperate, or self-contained, or any of the things that would make us unnatural and spoil us, but one really does ask us to go on being women.

"I explained their antagonism and secret loathing of the male in this way: Women have suddenly had the run of learning, and, being a thousand times more industrious than men, have rushed at it, like sheep into a clover field; and they have stuffed themselves too full. They are ruined as the black people were — by emancipation. These things should be done gradually. Men starved women for centuries; then they over-fed them; and now the thinking women are all suffering from too much food on an empty brain. They can't digest it. It's making them hate themselves for being women at all — like

baby-girls, who cry bitterly because they are not baby-boys. Women want to ignore just the things that nature simply won't let them ignore, and they detest men for mentioning these things. They say it's unmanly and hateful of men to remind women that they are women. They want to put the woman in them into the background and trample on it; they flout in themselves what the natural man has been accustomed to regard as their greatest possessions. They are so busy hating that they have got no time to remember there is such a thing as love. It is, in fact, a sort of suicide that they are committing. They make sex a crime, these epicene things; it is ridiculous to call them 'feminists,' for they honestly believe — owing to their muddled sex instincts — that all differences between men and women are artificial and accidental, not natural and everlasting.

"If you called a modern woman 'a ministering angel' now, she'd spit at you, or break your windows. Because they desire to substitute for their real power just those tedious things that belong to man's mind and life — just those things from which he seeks to escape at any cost when he comes to women. It's the woman who can break hearts that will always have power over the men best worth winning, not the woman who merely breaks windows. And the woman who can break hearts will always get more than she deserves, while the woman who can break windows never will.

"When I was young, we were rather like what your betrothed says of foxes: we didn't mind being hunted. And you remember the warning, 'When you go to women, don't forget your whip.' No

doubt Nietzsche did forget it, and so suffered a sharp scratch or two, and grew nasty and narrow-minded and spiteful about us all in consequence. Still, a man oughtn't to dream of taking his eye off us till he's outside the bars again. I admit that frankly.

"I had a great friend once when I was young — a sportsman; and when something happened, I forget what, he said (after he'd grown calm again and reconciled) that it was better to be mauled now and then than never have any big-game shooting. By which, in his vigorous and open-air fashion, he meant to imply that women are the biggest game of all.

"But they won't be much longer. The big-game women are dying out. The woman who is a *rendezvous* for discontented husbands and the predatory male is dying out. I used to know women who could bring a man across a drawing-room like a hunting spaniel — without looking at him. I could myself.

"Hastings Forbes came to see me a few days ago. He is still sorry for his tribulations. But he is, none the less, going to forgive her, as I knew he would. He remarked that of late, before his tragedy, it had seemed to him that his wife was becoming a sort of limited company — in which he hadn't enough shares.

"'The allotment always lies with us,' I said; 'but, of course, a married woman ought to send out nothing but letters of regret.' Still, they don't. It's wonderful what a lot of capital they can manage to employ sometimes, though stupid women do overcapitalise too.

"Don't think I am holding up Una as a model to

you. She's only a survival of the sporting type. It is not a nice type; still, it appealed far more to men than the latest sort of woman, and it had infinitely more power over them. Una, as a matter of fact, is hedging, and, from what her husband let drop, I should say the dentist will soon be done for. 'One can't absolutely quench a passion of so many years' standing,' said Hastings! So wily of him. But he implied the passion was for Una, not comfort and a French cook and all that Una stands for. That's one of the beauties of being rich and lacking a conscience. It enables you simply to snap your fingers at Nemesis, and have your cake and eat it too. An act of temporary aberration, I expect it will be considered. He reminded me that he was a Christian, and that therefore his prerogative was to forgive! Una has written to him, and quoted Browning about being in England in the springtime!

"Of course, Wicks will be fearfully out of practice when he comes back to work. But that will cure itself. Forbes talked of flogging him publicly when he returns. But I told him not to be selfish. 'You have exhibited such amazing self-control,' I said, 'that it would be a pity if you spoiled all by worrying the dentist. Be sure that he will have plenty to worry him without you.'

"Strange that such an early bird as Una should have cared to pick up this particular worm.

"Go and see my dear old friend, Judge Warner Warwick, in Florence — a precious old Indian, full of fun and an authority on Machiavelli. He will tell you much that is interesting.

"I shall be here until April, unless the Revolution

comes and I and my kind are swept away by the local celebrities — to make more room for the Goths and Vandals from the North.

"Your affectionate friend,

"CONSTANCE DANGERFIELD."

CHAPTER XII

OF THE CROCUSES

"ROOKLANDS,
"3 *March.*

"DEAR MR. DANGERFIELD,—

"Since I wrote to thank you for the present you sent me at Christmas — the beautiful copy in oils of Melozzo da Forli's angel, with the red sleeves and spike of Madonna lily — I have been very busy reading up Florence, or Firenze. And I want more books, still more books, so that I may not come out a dunce.

"I need to hear more about art, too, and just what sort of receptive spirit I must cultivate before I come.

"It is glorious to think that I really shall be there in a few weeks, and breathe Italy! I am sure it must be the right thing for me, because I'm loving the thought of it so much, and it is making me so nice to everybody. Don't you think that that is one of the rather beautiful things about human nature — then when a man, or woman, is really very happy and hopeful and looking forward to good things, they always seem to become angelic and anxious to make other people happy and hopeful too — as though they wanted their own full cup of blessings to brim over for other thirsty lips? But I suppose

you would say that anybody can be angelic when they are having an angelic time. Perhaps I really am having my fun with Italy now, and anticipation will be the best part of it.

"The crocus picture came up, and, I'm sorry to say, it also came out. You are so Italian, or Greek, or something; and Lady Vane isn't, and my Ralegh isn't either. So when the dear crocuses glimmered out of the green in their gold and purple and snow-white, and proclaimed to the world those startling words that 'Loveday is a Darling,' the assertion was hailed with shrieks of protest and proclaimed an abominable outrage, and the poor little wretches — about two thousand of them, Fry says — were dragged out neck and crop, so that this dreadful announcement should disappear. You don't understand English people a bit. 'It wasn't the words that frightened the birds, but the horrible'— fact that you, in cold blood and with deliberate and deadly purpose, could dare to call another man's sweetheart 'a darling' in this manner, and even publish it to the world, where it would flash out year after year to shock succeeding generations of the countryside. Only Fry supported it. He hated having to dig them up, and said that they made a beautiful picture, and would be a very pleasant and permanent joy of colour on that bank. He also added bluntly that it wasn't as if you'd put a lie there; but you'd said what was perfectly true, and he'd like to see the man, woman, or child that could contradict it! So I came out of it in rather a blaze of glory. But you didn't, I mourn to say. It's a question of 'good form' and 'common decency,' and so on. If anybody else had put

it there, it would have been the same. 'Emotional, and silly, and un-English, and exceedingly impertinent, coming from a stranger'—so Lady Vane says. 'A bit thick'—that's what Patrick Spedding called it. And my dear Ralegh is hurt (down deep out of sight somewhere) that you could have even *thought* about me by my Christian name, let alone deliberately traced the sacred word with a stick on the Vanestowe grass and plant it out in crocuses! And —an amazing thing—when I argue that it wasn't a capital offence, and that you are young and not old enough really to know better, Ralegh twirls his moustache and almost sighs, and seems to think that I'm very nearly as bad as you! He believes that if I had any proper feeling, I ought to cut you for evermore after such a performance; and yet, for the life of me, I can't see why a piece of frivol like that is any worse than dozens of things men say to me. I suppose you can say things you can't write, and write things you can't print in crocuses at large on such a self-respecting garth as Vanestowe. I only tell you about it because you'll not care a button; no more do I. I think it was jolly of you—a sin, of course, but quite a venial sin. I'm only really sorry for the poor crocuses. I suggested to Ralegh that he should re-arrange them, and let Fry plant them out again in these grim but true words: 'Bertram is a Bounder'; yet no, he seems to fear he will never smile again. He has forgiven you, being a good, dear thing, who never can harbour an unkind thought against anything but hawks and weasels; but Lady Vane has not; and, what's more, she hasn't forgiven me. Which is rather hard—don't you think?

I assured her that I had not the most shadowy idea of what you were doing, and thought you were merely planning the Vane coat-of-arms, or some such great and glorious design; but she doesn't believe me. I don't think she ever does believe me. But these personalities cannot possibly interest you. I'm longing to see some of your pictures. I shan't try to paint in Italy, whatever the temptation. I shall go in for learning Italian instead; and you'll have to find some clever person to teach me.

"By the way, I want two more copies of the Forli angel for friends, who are going to be married. It's such an original gift; so please ask the little artist you mentioned, who copies it so beautifully, to paint me two more. And I also want a copy of that darling cherub, with scarlet and silver wings and a little curly head bending over his lute — Rossi Fierentino — wasn't it? I made up a sonnet about him — just from that picture postcard you sent me! Oh, yes, you stare, but I can make sonnets, given the right inspiration. Of course, nobody who is anybody could possibly go to Firenze without making sonnets. But have no fear — I shan't ask you to read them.

"Fry wants to be remembered to you. He liked you, so be proud. It is always a great compliment for a young thing to be liked by an old thing; and yet the young things always seem to take it for granted. He liked you, because you love work and are not frightened by difficulties. The time is soon coming for the rhododendron seedling to bloom. There will be a solemn hush in the woods when the great day arrives, and all the old father and mother

rhodos will bend down with anxiety and hope to see what has been born. I shan't be there, but in Italy. But Fry is going to send me just three flowers from the first truss to blow, if it is worthy. I wonder what Nature has arranged?

"Lady Dangerfield has gone to Torquay. She is very well, and has ordered four new birds. Two died in the winter — little grey and rose-coloured things. She misses them, but seems glad that both died and not only one. They always sat together side by side, and she thinks that one gave the other the fatal cold. She also believes that it was influenza followed by pneumonia that killed them.

"This letter seems to grow more and more thrilling, so I will break off, that you may not get over-excited.

"Write to me about Firenze and art and Bergson. Especially Bergson. For why? Because somewhere, somehow, my Ralegh has heard about him, and been told that he combines the very latest philosophy and highest ethics with the truths of Revelation. Of course, this is just what Ralegh has been wanting for years. Will he find Bergson 'grateful and comforting,' d'you think? As far as I can remember the dim past, you did not. Tell me some things that I can bring out to dazzle Ralegh about Bergson.

"Good-bye. I hope you are painting well, and are satisfied (or fairly satisfied) with the beautiful things that you are making.

"Sincerely yours,
"Loveday Merton."

CHAPTER XIII

THE PAINTER'S CONTRITION

"CORSO REGINA ELENA, FIRENZE.
"8 *March.*

"DEAR MISS MERTON,—

"Thank you ever so much for your charming letter. I was delighted to get it, and devastated to hear of the destruction of the crocuses. Considering the matter critically and after a great effort of imagination, I think I see Sir Ralegh's point of view. He would deem it rather a homely, lower middle-class sort of thing to put any words into the grass; and if I'd arranged 'God is Love' or 'We want the Vote,' he would have resented it equally. A severe and chaste design he might have tolerated — nothing else; and to make a bald statement of an everyday fact — familiar, of course, to the whole world — no doubt struck him as banal and bourgeois to a degree. Probably he is right. I am not prepared to argue about it or justify my conduct. I merely apologise. It is all so long ago and I am so young. Besides, you mustn't apply English standards to me. Here the thing would hardly have led to a duel.

"My valued friend, Amedio Barsi, the painter, will send you two more Forli angels as he can. For the moment the poor man is in a hospital, sick. But

he will soon be well again, and only too glad to return to his dear angel. The angel is curiously woven into his life as a part of it. He calls her his Guardian Angel, and is quite idolatrous about her.

"I rejoice to know that you are coming out, and am working like three men in consequence, that I may spare you a few hours with a good conscience when you do come. My 'demon' is certainly not an angel, but a horrible, tireless fiend that makes me crave for work as other men crave for pleasure. It is mean and rather contemptible, this lust for making things morning, noon, and night; but I cannot escape. I am dominated, and if I play about for long and let the things that cry to be made remain unmade, their fleshless ghosts soon begin to punish and torture and torment me. People say, 'How joyful always to be turning your dreams into realities'; but I am doubtful about the joy. It's a battle, and the victories are few, and the spirits of many failures haunt your path and shake their dismal locks at you. I'm always thankful the critics and people never see my dreams; because if they did, no kind word should I have for the things done — they fall so far short of the things seen.

"Well, Art?

"I'm glad you can't keep away from it; and I shall go on my knees to see the sonnets that Fierenze is to inspire!

"It was a son of the soil, Benedetto Croce (you must read him), who said the vital word and swept so many wrong ideas into limbo. From the great concept that art is expression, he reached higher, to the evangel that all expression is art. This is to say

' good-bye ' to rules and laws and critical paraphernalia — ' the prattle of chambermaids,' as Montaigne called them a long time ago. Everything, then, stands or falls by itself; everything belonging to the individual work lies inside it — a fact that, of course, disposes of the trashy criticism that comes to a work of art vitiated by religious or political or other domestic predispositions. But though a modern writer has said that no critic of authority now tests art by the standard of ethics, he is unfortunately mistaken. If he had said, ' no critic of knowledge,' he might have been right, but authority is represented by the journal in which the critic writes, and many authoritative journals publish art criticism saturated with religious or other prejudice. We even submit to economic dictation in the matter, and pictures cannot be exhibited or books circulated, if in the opinion of certain tradesmen it would be ' bad business ' to do so. Modern criticism must be an ignorant and insincere and feeble mess, so long as there is no man brave enough to denounce this infamous scandal, or big enough to be heard if he did so.

" ' We must interpret expression,' says an honest critic — Spingarn, the American; and another good thing he says: that taste must reproduce the work of art within itself, to understand and judge. Then, at that supreme moment, æsthetic judgment itself rises into the empyrean of creative art. That's what great criticism means, and that's what it ought to do; but where is such criticism written to-day? Such criticism is art; but, when all is said, Spingarn knows very well that a gulf is fixed between the critic and the creator — a gulf about as wide as that between

a god and the universe that he has made. 'Intellectual curiosity,' he says, 'may amuse itself by asking its little questions of the silent sons of light, but they vouchsafe no answer to art's pale shadow, thought.'

"If art's shadow were really thought, though — pale or red — we might get forwarder. I should like to hear how many modern critics *do* think, or are concerned to tell us workers in large, general terms what we want to learn and ought to know. Art should be compact of reticence and sacrifice, but who is tempted to reticence or sacrifice by the critics of to-day? They miss the reticent work, just as the public misses it; they share the rush and hurry and over-production and shouting and struggling for foothold. Like the rest of the world, they simply haven't got time to bother about us. Art is just as much outside them as it is outside the rest, and criticism is merely their living, not their life.

"The attitude of the world to artists is rather interesting, and it would be amusing if it wasn't so offensive. It doesn't come to us to learn from us; it comes to see its own stupid, owlish, clownish ideas and opinions and values and points of view reflected. It doesn't want us to show it anything it can't see for itself, or make it think anything it hasn't already thought. If one has some mean trick of painting mist or imitating marble, or some sickly, sentimental knack of story-telling, or some broadly comic power of rendering the outside of mankind, that is enough. The world then recognises you for a brother; your eyes see with the same focus as its own, and you can

paint mist, or marble, or fuzzy-headed children forever, and take your place among the great and good. But justify your existence; show the world what it cannot see for itself; render form and colour, as found and understood by you after years of patient labour and devotion; mix your medium with loyal courage to noble ideals, and the world will either snigger or swear.

"Of artists, then, it may indeed be said that only 'their soul's light overhead' leads, or will ever lead them. They answer to their mistress, but the mart understands them not. Their work is translated into cash by the world afterwards; who knows or cares about the austerities and penances that went to make it? The only question is whether the man's achievement is a good investment — whether his fame is waxing or waning.

"And they who batten in the porches of art and get their living there — by criticising or selling — what do they care or know about the men who made, and still make, the food on which they feed and grow fat? No, we are alone — each absolutely and magnificently alone: public, critics, middlemen — all misunderstand us — not wilfully, but simply because it is their nature to. So I ask you to begin with a kindly view of the creators. Come to them here as one who feels some sense of their labours, immense difficulties and disappointments in the life-long battle to which they were called. And, from that standpoint, you will be surprised to find how comprehensible they grow, for sympathy is the mother of understanding.

"Read the lives of the Renaissance men as a start.

They must interest you very much, and be the right foundation to build upon before you come here.

"I can't talk about Bergson, just for the above reason, that the sympathy and the understanding don't belong to me. He says somewhere that 'physics is but logic spoiled.' His mind is photographed in that proposition. He thinks it a dreadful 'come down' for Ideas to be scattered into a physical series of objects, and for events to be placed one after the other. Of course, I should put it just the reverse way, and say that logic is mind stuff spoiled and the most deadly waste of time possible for a human intellect.

"He is very fine at times, and I'm an artist too, and recognise it. His idea of life as a wave swooping down upon matter, creating a vortex of the opposition, yet rushing on at one point to man — that's a great artistic inspiration; and he's full of things like that — rhetoric and purple. But science scorns such stuff, and so must I in connection with philosophy. Because I'm a monist (just at present), and Bergson's a dualist, and a deadly dualist too. Take his 'Meaning of Evolution.' After some gorgeous poetry, that I've mentioned before, about how life differs in different worlds, and how it appears whenever energy descends the incline and a cause of inverse direction retards the descent — after showing that we carbon people needn't think we are everybody, but that a lovelier and a livelier folk may easily be imagined as dwelling in lovelier and livelier planets than this — what does he do?

"He horrifies me, smothers me, and strangles my most cherished ideas by saying that conscience and

brain are only as the knife and the sharp knife-edge, and that they are no more co-extensive than the knife and the knife-edge! Can you think the edge away from the knife? No, I'll swear you can't — or anybody else. Can you think the sharpness away from the edge? Only if you substitute bluntness.

"Then — worst of all — leaving me flattened out, dished and diddled and undone, he actually asserts that the difference between the conscious and the unconscious brain is the difference between the closed and the open — a difference, not of degree, but of kind! So much for his Evolution! Now that's not metaphysics at all, but physics naked and unashamed; and as a monist I simply shriek with horror, and turn up the whites of my eyes, and lift imploring hands to science to come to the rescue.

"Bergson asserts that a difference of kind, not degree, separates man from the rest of the animal world; and that's a statement to be swiftly slain by those qualified to slay it. Indeed, it's already done. Sir Ray Lankester was the executioner.

"Professor Bergson is a remarkable phenomenon — an intellect turned against intellect, toying with instinct, lifting a faculty that he calls 'intuition' to a higher throne than human reason, and keeping it there by the exercise of almost superhuman reason. He's a king in the twopenny-halfpenny realm of metaphysics, no doubt; but I wish that he had served in the heaven of art rather than ruled in that stuffy little hell. An anti-rationalist with such a brain! Isn't it a puzzle? A worse enemy even than those of Science's own household — I mean the few men of science who waste their spare time in seeing

ghosts and hankering after the resurrection of the dead.

"Of course, such men will weep tears of joy on Bergson's neck, because he asserts explicitly that the destiny of consciousness is not bound up with the destiny of cerebral matter, and declares that consciousness is not only free, but freedom itself! That's metaphysics again, and no living man knows what it means, just because it means nothing; but as the destiny of cerebral matter is dust, then the destiny of individual consciousness is to go out, as the flame of the candle when the oil is spent. The oil is the life, the wick is the cerebral matter that exploits it, the flame is the consciousness. That's rational, because all will admit that by its light we can remember the candle, and by their works you shall remember men; but when the workman dies — he dies indeed, and Nature is perhaps clearer on that subject than any other.

"Of course, women adore Bergson, and they are right to do so, for nobody will deny that they have more intuition than reason, and he rates it higher. Intuition is mind itself — so he says; therefore it follows that you have the mind, we merely the intellect. And you can bend to us; but we cannot rise to you. Metaphysics, Miss Loveday Merton, is a set of showy and very efficient manacles for the thing we call life. Thrust life into them, and it cannot move hand or foot in any direction whatever. It cannot walk, run, or dance. It atrophies; it petrifies. The hungry, energetic, creative soul turns from metaphysics in horror; and of metaphysicians themselves, there is not one who ever abided by his

convictions, or mistook his stone for bread, when it came to the practical business of being alive.

"A Bergson can no more live on, or by, his philosophy than a Bradley; but there is this difference between them: Bergson claims to offer us a course of sustaining diet; Bradley, more subtle and much more far-seeing, promises nothing. Moreover, he gives physics a wide berth, and plays the game with the proper tools. Bergson is shipwrecked in an attempt to make an impossible voyage.

"I shall be tremendously interested to hear if Bergson strengthens Sir Ralegh's Christianity and appeals to him as a sure rock and tower of defence. How people surprise us. He was shocked to find me an out-and-out bounder; and I am surprised beyond measure to hear that he is a metaphysician!

"Tell him that I am much cast down about the crocuses (I suppose you botanists call them 'croci' — more shame to you if you do).

"I did like getting your letter, and hope that you'll have time, between debauches of Crowe and Cavacaselle, to write to me again presently.

"Most truly yours,

"BERTRAM DANGERFIELD.

"P.S.— But remember, as Rodin says somewhere, to love the masters and not label them. Go to them for joy and inspiration, and don't repay their gifts by treating them like bottles in a chemist's shop."

CHAPTER XIV

DEPARTURE

So large was the company assembled at Chudleigh Station to see Loveday Merton start upon her travels, that another passenger found himself quite overlooked; but while she stood in a crowd, and her maid and her uncle's man bustled with the luggage, there entered the train elsewhere Mr. Hastings Forbes and his kit-bag. He travelled in a smoking-carriage, and concealed himself as quickly as possible behind the *Morning Post;* for he did not wish to be seen or questioned at this moment. At the station were Sir Ralegh Vane, Admiral Champernowne, Nina Spedding and her brother Patrick, Walter Ross, the bailiff of Vanestowe, and Adam Fry, the gardener, with a bouquet of hothouse flowers. Loveday, immensely surprised and gratified at such a farewell, became quite emotional.

"Good gracious!" she said, "it's like a princess, or somebody, starting on a journey. It's lovely of you, Patrick, and you, Nina! And Uncle Felix would get up, though he hates getting up as much as you, Pat."

"Forbes is in the train," said young Spedding, who had marked the secretary of the golf club. "Early rising isn't in his line either. Perhaps he's going to find something to do. Shall I scare him up?"

"No," said Loveday. "I've got Marguerite. She's going to travel with me."

Marguerite Hetich was a Swiss, and more than a servant to Loveday. She had worked as a sewing-maid in the school at Paris where Miss Merton's education was supposed to be completed; and when she returned home, Loveday brought the girl with her.

"Write about the rhododendron, Fry, and tell Mrs. Stacey to let me know all about her baby when it arrives," said the traveller. Then she shook hands with them, kissed her uncle, Nina Spedding, and her betrothed, and waved her handkerchief to them as she departed.

At Newton, Marguerite joined her mistress, and two hours later they met Hastings Forbes in the luncheon-car.

He was agreeable, but evasive, and, as he told Loveday nothing of his plans, she did not mention hers.

But a time was coming when the man's enterprise could no longer be concealed, and, to the amazement of Miss Merton, when she arrived at Victoria with the Neill-Savages to catch the boat-train on the following morning, there, once more, was Mr. Forbes pursuing his journey.

She saw him, but not until a later hour of the day did he see her.

Stella and Annette were travellers of experience, and hesitated not to make their friend and her maid useful in every possible manner.

"The crossing is foretold as 'medium,'" said Miss Neill-Savage, "and that means discomfort.

We will have a cabin, I think. Annette is a good sailor; I am uncertain."

They sat with their backs to the engine, and directed the arrangement of the windows and disposal of the hand-luggage. They were dressed alike, in tailor-made gowns with violet hats; and they each carried a little bag of violet leather, which contained, amongst other things, small silver-topped bottles holding egg-flip and brandy.

"I hope we shall all lunch together on the train; but one never knows," said Stella. "Is your maid a good sailor? The Swiss rarely are. I trust she will keep well and useful. It is a great bother when servants collapse on these occasions, as they so often do. They lack our spirit and pluck to face physical catastrophies."

"She's a splendid sailor," declared Loveday. "She's never been ill in her life, and she's greatly excited at the thought she'll go through Switzerland to-morrow morning."

A stiff breeze fretted the grey sea with foam, and Miss Neill-Savage frowned as the train ran between Folkestone and Dover.

"I'm afraid 'medium' was not the word," she said. "We must hope for a turbine boat and a swift crossing."

Then followed the roar and bustle at the quay; the swinging cranes and hooting steam-whistles, the white cliffs sinking into the grey, and the swirl of the seas as the *Pas de Calais* set forth to churn them. Again Loveday met Mr. Forbes, and he, now perceiving that some sort of explanation was demanded, and knowing that the girl went in charity

with all men and women, confessed his proceedings.

"How perfectly extraordinary!" she said. "Of course, I don't mean what you tell me — that's splendid — but that you are travelling in our train all the way!"

He was gratified at her reception of his difficult news.

"I am awfully glad. I may be useful; in fact, I must be useful. Command me. We'll lunch together. It will be a better lunch than yesterday. The food on English trains — well, one doesn't like to think about it. In fact, I always take my own from home; but yesterday I left in a hurry, and hadn't time. You'll enjoy your lunch to-day, however. My only objection to the Simplon express is the vibration. Avoid red wines; the white are quite possible mixed with apollinaris."

At Calais he made himself of service, and since Miss Neill-Savage, as she had feared, proved unequal to lunching, he brought to her presently a little fruit and a French roll.

"I am fortunate," he observed, as he sat in the Neill-Savage 'supplement' and watched the lady toy with a bunch of loquats. "I am distinctly lucky, for my compartment has nobody in it but myself. One's convenience is enormously increased when that happens. You haven't got to climb up that hateful little ladder, for one thing, which you always must if doubled up with an older man, and you have more room to undress, and can take your own time to get up and shave when the train is at rest at a station and so on."

"The dressing is a difficulty," she confessed.

"Doing one's hair is the most complicated business at fifty miles an hour."

"Doubtless, doubtless," he answered. Then boldly he mentioned his wife.

"Una always hated these trains when we went to the Riviera. She has a passion for air. She would ride on the front of the engine if she could. A draught is essential to her comfort in a railway carriage; but it is quite destructive of mine. We generally travelled by different trains accordingly. To rush at high speed through every sort of weather in a motor-car is her highest bliss — to me the car is nothing but a complication to life — a nuisance. It enormously increases one's circle of friends, and, of course, one cannot live in the country without it. A necessity, I grant; but not a luxury, in my opinion."

Stella, who knew not the purpose of the other's pilgrimage, but was familiar with his recent misfortune, felt some surprise to hear him mention the lady and observe his contentment and cheerful aspect.

"How he keeps up!" she said to Loveday, when they sat together after luncheon, and Mr. Forbes had withdrawn to smoke a cigar.

Then the younger explained, and Stella started with such indignation that her air-cushion gave a shiver.

"Miserable thing!" she said.

"Don't quarrel with him yet, however," advised Annette. "He may be very useful between here and Florence."

"Quarrel with him? No; but after to-morrow I shall certainly not know him; and, of course, you

will not either. Preposterous wretch! It's hard to imagine anything quite so shameless!"

Loveday changed the subject.

"How nice it is not to see any hedges," she said. "The hedges make dear little Devonshire so stuffy — they're such silly things, and spoil views and turn us into a sort of irritating patchwork. Just look out at this great rolling country. I always love it. Now I'm going to sit at the window and make tremendous notes for my first letter home."

CHAPTER XV

LOVEDAY TO RALEGH

" HOTEL ATHENA, FIRENZE.

" MY DEAR, DEAR LOVE,—

" Here we are at last, and I write where I can lift my eyes to the great dome of the cathedral, seen at the end of a narrow street of houses and lifting to its cross against the blue sky. The journey was not too long, for we came through miles and miles of loveliness, and I quite sympathised with Marguerite, when she broke down at the morning glory over her native land. But to me the real glory began after the Simplon Tunnel. Once in Italy, I felt the feeling that I have only once felt in my life before — when you told me you loved me and wanted to marry me — a sort of holy feeling that makes you shake all over, and opens windows all through you to let in a river of new light. Italy pulls at me with a thousand beautiful hands, and sings to me a new song. There was the great lake first — Maggiore, with islands like little jewels dotted on it; and then Milan, where we stopped and lunched at the Hotel Bristol. It looked so absurd to see the hideous word 'Bristol' out here! But Stella and Annette have stayed there before, and they never lose a chance to renew old acquaintances and refresh the memories they have left behind. They were greeted with respect, but no enthusiasm, I thought. Then the

cathedral, which put me in mind of Dorothy Champernowne's wedding-cake — you remember. I didn't know whether I ought to like it or not, but I didn't. The inside is far more beautiful to me than the outside — gloomy and solemn, with most noble pillars, and a roof that you think is glorious till you find it is a painted sham. Then you rebound and hate it. I always hate anything that pretends, and I know you do.

"We didn't go to the Leonardo picture, or the Brera, as there wasn't time; but I went to the great gardens, and thought and longed for you, because the taxodiums are most wonderful and huge. They live with their feet in the water, and tower up into mighty trees. I wish your taxodium in the Lodge plantation could see them: they might make it ambitious, and tempt it to grow a little.

"Then off again through the Lombardy plains, where they were saving their hay in roasting sunshine. The wagons were drawn by pairs of great white or mouse-coloured oxen — gentle-looking monsters, that would have made you frantic because they went so slowly. Between the little strips of hay they grow hemp and corn and lupins; and the grape-vines, all full of a glad delicious green now, seem to join their beautiful arms and dance round and round the mulberry bush — miles and miles of them — at least, they look like mulberry bushes that they hang upon. The farms are scattered over the land, and streams run through it; and here and there are large patches of shallow water, where they grow rice. You see rows of women wading along, like bright aquatic birds, planting the rice in the water as they go.

"And then to Bologna at dusk, and Stella knew that I was fainting with hunger, and sent Marguerite to the restaurant with exact directions for food.

"'You will find chicken, cold meat, fruit, hard-boiled eggs, and rolls,' she said. 'And they will put them into a big blue bag for you, and give you paper napkins to go with them. Buy also a bottle of Chianti.'

"It all happened just as Stella foretold, and we ate greedily, and I drank more wine than ever I drank before, for Stella and Annette like oranges better, and said they were 'more quenching.'

"We climbed up and up into the dark Apennine, through endless tunnels, and then rushed down the other side; and there, stopping at a station, the loveliest thing of all happened, for out of a wood a nightingale sang, and across the darkness little flashes of light trailed and flickered, like tiny fairy lanterns being waved to each other. It was a most magical moment, and the dear fire-flies seemed to be signalling a welcome to me. They lived in a garden of olives, but it was too dark for me to know that then. The next day I saw olives, and found that they were easily the loveliest trees in the world. They look as if they were moulded out of silver, but really they are 'greener than grey and greyer than green,' as a poem about them says. They are fearfully difficult to paint, and Mr. Dangerfield tells me that not Sargent himself can touch them; though Sargent, he admits, has conquered the cypress and painted it in a most heavenly manner, with all the golden sunshine caught in its darkness. And so we got to Firenze — for Mr. Dangerfield simply orders me to

call this place 'Firenze,' and not 'Florence,' which word is based upon the ancient name of the city. He thinks it absurd for different nations to have different names for the same countries or capitals. Take the Italian name for London — Londra. Well, as he truly says, the real name fits the place — it's just 'London,' but a charming, musical word like 'Londra' no more belongs to it than a hard word like 'Florence' belongs to Firenze.

"You'd hate the noise, and think the Italians rather undignified as a race. But, somehow, to me their lack of self-consciousness is most delightful. I feel as if I had been here before, and nothing surprises me in the least. As I write, a puff of wind has just blown fifty picture postcards into the air off a kiosk in the piazza. They were flying about like a flock of little birds; but the people aren't an atom cross. Children are running about picking up the cards, and everybody stands and laughs at the joke. The men crack their whips like pistols at every corner; the trams ring bells ceaselessly; the motors hoot or play octaves; the eternal bicycles jangle; and everybody shouts and makes as much noise as they possibly can, with or without an excuse. But the noise seems to become second nature. It goes on night and day, and you soon get accustomed to it. I believe I shall actually like it before long.

"Mr. Dangerfield, of course, throws a flood of light on this new world to me.

"For instance, in answer to some question I put to him, he told me there was no such thing as public opinion in Italy. You can't manufacture a hard-

and-fast thing like public opinion in a mere fifty years or so, and, of course, United Italy is only fifty years old or thereabout. But we English, who come out here soaked in centuries of public opinion, are very much puzzled to find none, and instantly offer our own brand, bottled in the United Kingdom, to United Italy, and seem quite astonished to find the Latins cannot see with our stupid Anglo-Saxon eyes. We think that Italy would be perfect if it were run on English lines — just as though the Italians in London, instead of doing what they are told and conforming in every way, were to begin putting London right and criticising everything from the Constitution to the baking-powder. They are wonderfully patient with the English and Americans in Florence. But only, I should think, because it pays them to be so.

"I am going to learn Italian, Ralegh, or begin to. I feel, somehow, that Italian belongs to me and is waiting to come into my head. Mr. Dangerfield has an Italian friend — a young man at one of the libraries — who is a genius at teaching. I really seem to have found myself here, and if you were only here it would be heaven. But you will have to come; and I believe you'll have to come a great deal, for it is perfectly certain that my life must never be quite drawn away out of Italy again — not altogether.

"I would a million times sooner have a villa here than a flat in London. In fact, you know that was only a child's idea. But a villa here — oh, my own precious Love, I believe after you got over the strangeness and began to see Italians from the proper

angle, which isn't English in the least, that you would feel it was a great additional experience. The colour and the light, and the teeming life, and the gay, joyous feeling — it is all like nothing else in the world. It seems specially a country for those who are still young and happy.

"But I've written enough for one letter. This is only to say that I've got here safely, and am fearfully and wonderfully excited, and feel as if I were finger-tips all over — to touch and welcome each new impression that is to come to me.

"The concierge knows Marguerite's people at Territet. Our train stopped there for a moment coming out in the early morning, and she would alight, so that her feet might touch the earth. Wasn't it nice of her? I shall give her a holiday going home, and let her stop in Switzerland for a week or two.

"I'm going to work like a slave here — at pictures and Italian. Mr. Dangerfield is most kind, and has put his automobile at our service — an act that has entirely won Stella and Annette to him. But he is a tremendous worker himself, I find, and hates loafing and idleness. We are to see his studio presently.

"You will rejoice to hear that Mr. Forbes has found it possible to forgive his wife, who is here in a lovely villa at Fiesole. It seems that it was all a sort of mad hallucination, and the dentist has gone back to his patients — though whether they will all go back to him is doubtful, I suppose. But I expect they will, because he's such a genius. People forgive genius everything. The whole affair seems quite different out here — not so terribly important.

At any rate, I always rather liked her, and I'm going to see them presently. Mr. Forbes travelled by our train, in response to an urgent telegram from her; and he was exceedingly kind and useful on several occasions coming out.

"My heart sinks when I look through the list of introductions that I've brought. They read so *stuffily*. Probably I shall not use half of them, for I'm really here to work, and six weeks or two months is nothing.

"You shall have another letter next Sunday from your devoted

"LOVEDAY.

"P.S.— Coming through France, where the poplars were all in their spring clothes, all wearing the latest thing in hobble skirts, I decided that hedges are a mistake. You must send out orders to have all yours pulled down!

"P.S. 2.— I hope you are having 'tight lines' and killing a lot of trout."

CHAPTER XVI

FIRENZE — SUNSET

THE sun was sinking where marble mountains hollowed to receive it, and earthward flowed the light, mingling afar off with delicate hazes that hid the horizon. Faint, colourless forms stole there — the crowns of forests and the heave of hills; but beneath them, under the sunset, breaking as it seemed from a matrix of western gold and formed from the substance of that splendour, there trembled out a city.

Like a green snake a river ran through the midst of her, and above her walls of amber and old ivory the rusty warmth of a myriad roof-trees shone. Her domes were overlaid with light and her pinnacles fretted with flame; yet all was kneaded with the gracious breath of the hour, so that no single spark of fire or plane of light flashed out to break the universal glow; for evening misted over the city and washed her with cooling airs, that spread a tangible medium between light and shadow and melted them into harmonious mosaic. She was a jewel of many facets. Green things flowed in upon her to right and left, mingling their verdant bosses and dark spires with her architecture, billowing above the russet roofs and carrying spring into her heart. The chestnut brought flowers to her; the olive wound like a veil of smoke through the fringe of her garment; the

cypress rising beside the dim rainbows of roof and gateway, marked her boundaries and precincts, mourned above the places of her dead.

Many a dome and tower, and one campanile, that rose like a silver ghost among ponderable things, broke the deep breast of her, and fortune so ordered the disposal of these lofty works that each lance of stone, each turret, rotunda, bell-chamber, sprang aloft in just relation to the rest — disposed with happy fitness to meet the thirst of the eye, even as the bridges symmetrically spanned the river, where it wound over the heart of the city. There the green waters flushed to rose, then faded and thinned and twinkled away under the sunset, to flash forth again and again, like a string of golden beads.

Cry of birds was in the air, where the swifts circled and loved high overhead; and from beneath, great and little bells throbbed intermittently, now near, now far.

"Firenze!" said Dangerfield. "Look at it and love it! You don't want me yet. I'll come back in half an hour."

He strolled off, and left Loveday on the balcony of the Piazza Michelangelo under San Miniato. He had brought her up in his automobile and not let her look until now. She stood with her white dress fluttering, her hands held tight on the parapet, her lips just parted, her bosom lifting, and the light in her eyes. Then, not gradually, but with a sudden, triumphant gest, the stupendous vision sank into her heart. She gasped; her eyes grew dim before the wonder of it; tears broke the reflection and turned all into a whirling conflagration of colour. They

fell, and the city resumed its steadfast splendours. For a time Loveday looked almost helplessly upon it; then her mind, having paid the first natural tribute, swiftly hungered after knowledge. Interest began to share her spirit with enthusiasm. She felt unutterably happy, and desired to express her joy to some fellow creature. She looked round for the artist, and he saw her do so, where he strolled two hundred yards away. Then he returned to her.

"It was nice of you to go away," she said. "I suppose you know how this makes anybody feel when they see it for the first time?"

"What d'you think about it?"

"I don't know. I've not thought yet; you can only feel first. It's like a great cup to me, a cup built up of wonderful rare stones, and gold and silver, and coral and every precious gem; and the sunset is poured into it, like golden wine, to make the bright, beautiful thing still more bright and beautiful."

He nodded.

"I like to pull it down sometimes, and then turn back the centuries as you turn the pages of a book. I like to go back and back and back to the beginning, when the valley was a great lake and man hadn't arrived. One mighty gleam of far-reaching waters under the Apennine; but that's been drained away for millions of years, I suppose. Then there rose forests, and hunger 'drove wolven from the brake,' and deer fled before them. Wild beasts haunted the woods, and great fish filled the river. The forefathers of Firenze arrived at this time—hunters and fishers who roamed wild Tuscany, from

Latium below to Lombardy above. Thousands of years sped, and turned the hunters into merchants, and destroyed the forests, and lifted a busy city of trade beside Arno, where the river and the great roads came together and made a centre of might and power. And more years passed, and Florentia grew into a merchant queen; but for you and me it was the re-birth that put the diadem on her forehead."

"She's unspeakably beautiful. And she seems so kind and welcoming. But shall I ever know her?"

"No," he said. "You'll certainly never know her. No Anglo-Saxon, or Teuton, or Celt can ever know her. There are infinite subtleties that belong to her — age-born things that run through her very blood. We can't be her children, and yet we can be her foster-children — well content and happy to be numbered with her people. Her story one can easily learn, because she's not like Venice or Rome, that make you despair by the length and complexities of their histories. One can master her to that extent — just the history of her facts; but underneath them — like a subterranean river — moves the mystery of her life — the Tuscan spirit, the thing that made her so unique and wonderful. It springs of Dionysus, and was born out of the woods and mountains. It is unmatched in Italy, and pagan in essence; it held its way through the centuries, and Christianity's self couldn't smother it. Be thankful for that!"

"Talk about the things that I can see here underneath us," she said. "It's so beautiful to feel that every one of them stands for some chapter in the story."

"They do. When I come up here, I always seem to see the ghosts of the big fellows brooding over the place, like bright exhalations. At dawn or evening I feel them in the shining clouds; by night the moonlight shows them to me. They are ever so grand and splendid, yet I know they have the spirit of youth in them still — they are so joyous, so busy about the stupendous things that they are making, so ignorant of the air of the re-birth that they breathe and that is purifying the very blood in their veins. They look like happy children through the mists of time; and I like to think of them so when I'm up here, and dwell on their joys and triumphs rather than their sorrows and tragedies and disappointments. But they were artists before everything; so they suffered — the least as well as the greatest — suffered as only artists can suffer."

"And rejoiced as only artists can rejoice," she said.

They talked on till the dusk was down, and he answered the questions she rained on him.

It was understood that he would give her a general education on the pictures — "just to peg out the ground of her mind," as he said.

"But no doubt you'll begin as keen as mustard, and then gradually cool off — like everybody else," he added.

She was indignant at this, and would not hear of it.

"If you only knew how I'm longing to begin and how hard I worked at them before I came out, you wouldn't say that," she declared.

Loveday felt supremely happy, and when she was happy she generally became confidential.

She talked to the man as they drove swiftly back to her hotel.

"I'm glad I'm late for dinner," she said. "It will show Stella that I am going to be absolutely independent here. This is my home. This is my air and food — everything proper to my nature! You'll say it's too soon to talk like that; but I feel it through and through me; and, still stranger, I knew I should feel it before I came. Now I understand thousands of mysteries that I didn't understand in England — why I puzzled people, for instance, and why the things I said and the things I laughed at often horrified Lady Vane and worried Ralegh. But I shan't worry and horrify people here. I belong here, just as you belong here. I feel as if the life wasn't new to me, as if even the language wasn't absolutely new. It's like coming home."

He listened to this outburst and cautioned her.

"Don't let Italy run away with you. And don't fall in love with her if you can possibly help doing so. Remember — oh, all sorts of things — Vanestowe, and duty, and so on."

"You won't damp me," she said. "You won't alter me. It's down deep, deep in me!"

"I know just how you feel — I went through it all. But that was different. I was free — you're not. You can't be a foster-child of Italy, so it's too late to wish it."

She laughed.

"I am already — whether I wish it or not."

"Then what about Sir Ralegh and the future?"

"I see that quite clearly," she answered. "We women can't escape our fate; nor can our future hus

bands. Instead of a flat in London, which was a sort of dream of my youth, I must have a villa at Firenze. And there you are!"

"And his opinion?"

"Could any living creature see what we saw to-night and not want to spend at least half of his life in reach of it?"

"But does it not strike you that the hills of Haldon on a nice, rainy, hunting morning would be far more beautiful to Sir Ralegh than a bird's-eye view of Paradise itself, let alone this place?"

"At present, yes; but surely he can learn? We can all learn. You are going to educate me; then I'm going home to educate him. What could be simpler?"

CHAPTER XVII

FORGIVEN

"HE has forgiven me," said Una Forbes.

Loveday had called upon her without telling anybody, and, as happens in these cases, found herself received with open arms. Mrs. Forbes was a large, flaxen-haired, handsome woman, with telling eyes, and a big mouth whose lips were never still. She spoke volubly, but had a light touch in conversation. One word set listeners gasping, yet before they had time to ponder the utterance, the speaker was off again. The thin ice on which she chose to perform never cracked.

"Thank God, you have the artist's soul, Loveday, and understand something of the joy of life! Here in Italy one knows what it means; and yet there is another side. If one can be happy, one can suffer dreadfully too. Hastings is a man in a thousand. You wouldn't think him a great student of character, but he is. And such philosophy! I've never been a *real* Christian, you know; but henceforth I shall be —a strenuous, living follower! Oh, Loveday, the large charity of that man! He comprehended! He wept when he came back to me. Don't let it go further, but you always charm confidences. He felt it fearfully. When he entered this room I saw him aged. But my tears will soon wipe out the furrows

on his face. People don't talk about these things, simply because they have not the courage. But the Latin mind is different. Here there is a far deeper understanding of human nature. You will soon realise that. Men will follow you in the streets if you walk about alone. It is the Italian instinct for beauty. Labourers sing grand opera at their work. You may pass a man mending the drains and warbling 'La Traviata' correctly at any moment. Would it pain you if I mention Mr. Wicks, or do you feel that you would rather I didn't?"

"I know just what you mean about Italy being different," said Loveday. "It's in the air. At home it would be sure to pain me fearfully if you had mentioned Mr. Wicks. Here I shan't mind in the least."

"That sounds flippant, but still — how true to nature and Italy! It's in the air, as you say so delightfully — everything is larger and more genial, and gentle and beautiful. So we get larger and more genial, and even more beautiful ourselves. I think beautifully here. When Hastings put his arm round my shoulder and said, 'I forgive you, Una!' I felt like a poem by Carducci. I wasn't surprised; but I glowed, because I knew that this blessed country was working its magic on him too. I have taken this villa for six months. There are relics of the Medici here, and other interesting associations. They are comforting, but there has been agony for me in this place — great agony. Arthur Wicks was a man — how shall I say it? In a word, he was in love with love — not with me. So, at least, it struck me, though he would never allow it. He suffered too. He is a dreamer and an inarticulate poet. More-

over, he has uncertain health — a fact he concealed from me. In the first joy and wonder of finding that I loved him, his health improved. He explained his psychology to me — the earliest rapture of his passions. It was very interesting and beautiful, and, of course, sacred. I need hardly ask you to regard it as sacred, Loveday. In a word, my love filled him with the enthusiasm of humanity, as it has been beautifully called by somebody. Such was his joy at finding the world so much more interesting than his profession had led him to expect, that he discovered a perfect well of philanthropy hidden in his own nature, and did many kind and generous things, and doubtless astonished his friends by such a sudden and beautiful development of character. Then he felt the world well lost for me, and we threw in our lots together and came here, and lived for each other for several months. I'm not boring you?"

"It's fearfully interesting," said Loveday. "All real life is, Una."

"He got a cold on his chest. Real life again! It seems stupid to put it in that bald way; but a cold on the chest is a cold on the chest; and I found that he was not very brave physically. In fact, he thought that he was going to die, and he dwelt a good deal on the subject of his married sister at Paignton. Fancy talking about Paignton at Florence! It seems a desecration, doesn't it? 'Arthur,' I said to him, as he tossed and coughed and kept feeling his pulse, 'Arthur, you're home-sick!' Though my voice must have rung with reproach, he didn't contradict me. He is a man of exquisite sensibilities when in good health; but illness revealed another side

to his nature. It's no use denying that he was snappy with me. Artists are bad patients, as a rule; their nerves and emotions are always so far finer than common men's. He recovered, of course — I nursed him devotedly, though I hate and loathe sick nursing. I hate it almost as much as I hate the thought of death. In fact, it's all in the same line of thinking, because illness is really the assault of the King of Terrors, even to the extent of a cold on the chest. And I am sensitive, too, and fearfully capable of feeling. A pin-prick to me is worse than a tooth out to some people. And, talking of teeth, one comes to the next phase. Arthur, as I think I told you, is an artist. He called his profession a craft, but he had really elevated it to a fine art. He deals in ivory and gold and precious workmanship. He has made many a woman's mouth beautiful as Solomon's temple — on a small scale, of course. And when he got better, the artist in him began to cry out — dumbly at first, then audibly. He scraped acquaintance with the English dentist here, and, rather to my surprise, invited him to dinner. And they talked shop! Dentists' shop! That opened my eyes, but I won't pretend to say I was sorry, because, while still devoted to the man, I felt very sure that love never could be his whole existence, as it is mine. I found *The Dental Journal,* or some such thing, began to come regularly by post from England; and by a thousand other little indications I saw his ruling passion rise again and tower steadfast above the roseate clouds of love — so to speak. Dentistry, in fact, was his morning star, not I. He put his art first."

"They all put something first," said Loveday.

"If it isn't art, it's games, or sport, or politics, or publicity. We only fit into niches; we're never the temple."

"That doesn't hold always. Hastings — oh, my God, the golden heart of that man! He has lived in widowhood. He has known me all these months better than I knew myself. He has felt that it was merely a midsummer madness; for while a man of great continence and coldness in his own nature, yet he has the imagination to understand that I am kneaded with fire. Yes, he, too, though none guesses it, is an artist in his way. A most beautiful life, though it appears lethargic to the outer world. There is more — far more in him than meets the eye. He has made only one stipulation: that we don't go back to Chudleigh. Needless to say, I am entirely of his opinion. I marvel sometimes how I could endure the place. Here one feels wings springing from one's shoulders — one is buoyant — and so forgiving to everybody. It's the sun. Have you ever thought of that? You can't forgive people if you've got cold feet; but when you're glowing through and through, then you realise what human nature really is — how forgivable and pathetic. I ought not to say so, but the poor here love me already. I have the imagination to see the difference between my state and theirs. A lira, as you know, is tenpence. Well, for tenpence you can bring a flash of pure joy into the life of about nine people out of every dozen who pass you in Italy! Is not that a great thought? But Arthur — I am forgetting him. Not that I shall ever forget him really, though already he figures in my mind as a bright but unsubstantial vision. It is perfectly

extraordinary the tricks the mind plays us, Loveday. What do you suppose is the most vivid impression that he has left upon me? His cough-mixture. It was peculiarly horrid, and I can still see myself waking punctually — I can always wake or sleep at a moment's notice; it is a gift — waking punctually and pouring it out every three hours, and making him drink it. I can still smell the abominable stuff. It was characteristic of the artist temperament — so near akin to the child's — that he always ate a grape afterwards — to take away the nasty taste. The dim night-light, the rustling olive logs on the fire, the smell of the medicine, and Arthur's unshaved chin and miserable eyes — it is a picture I shall never forget."

"And he's gone back to Exeter?" said Loveday.

"He has gone back. I made him go back. Towards the end he weakened and talked about setting up here; but I would not allow that. Our love was dead. It had burned itself out, as far as I was concerned, and he was equally conscious that all was over, only far too chivalrous to say so. But I made him go home and face the music. I heard from him only three days ago. He wrote coldly, and seemed to think his life was clouded. His sister at Paignton has evidently said some strong and unkind things about me. A sister at Paignton would. No doubt there are a mean sort of patients who won't return to him. But not the nice ones. They'll flock back, and be thankful to do so. But I run on so fast. It is because I am so happy — no doubt happier than I deserve to be. It is more blessed to give than to receive, and it's more blessed to forgive than be for-

given. I think Hastings feels that. He is recovering his self-respect. He is a good listener and lets me talk. I think he feels that he has really done the big thing. And, in a sort of way, he has been rewarded. It's only a worldly accident, but it has increased our power of well-doing. My old Uncle Jackson died a month ago — my father's brother. He was always ridiculously fond of me — I amused him — and he left me fifty thousand pounds!"

"You've given it to your husband!" cried Loveday.

"How clever of you to think that! But — no. My Hastings wouldn't know what on earth to do with it. His simple tastes and needs — ah, no — it would bother him to death. He knows that everything I have is his — everything, and a wife's love and worship as well; but capital would only inconvenience him. Besides — you never know. Will you come to dinner to-night? — to-morrow, then? I see the Neill-Savages are at the 'Athena.' Of course, you are stopping with them. Have they said anything about me? Hastings tells me that you all came out together."

"No, they haven't said anything worth repeating. They were very grateful to Mr. Forbes on the journey."

"Ah! His heart was full. He was glad to let his happiness take shape. But now yourself — your dear, lovely self! You'll glory in Italy and art, and all the rest of it. We shall meet at parties. Say nothing about my affairs. Until now I have lived a very secluded life, and there was a vague impression, outside the villa, among the few who called, that

Mr. Wicks was an invalid brother. I did not contradict the rumour, fortunately, and as soon as we found that we must part, I let it flash out that I was expecting my husband. Of course, plenty knew the facts, but none that matter. Speak of us kindly among the nice people — for Hastings' sake. There are pleasant men here, though they tend to be elderly. I want to stop on for two months yet; then go north. We probably shan't come home again for some time — a year or more."

Loveday rose, and Una Forbes accompanied her to the garden-gate, plucked a bunch of roses for her, and kissed her hand at parting.

"Thank you for coming," she said. "You have brought a cup of water to thirsty lips. You may meet Hastings ascending the hill. No, you won't; he'll be in the tram. Good-bye — fix your own night for dinner and bring a friend — an artist, if you know one. God bless you!"

CHAPTER XVIII

EDUCATION ATTEMPTED

"I'm at that exciting stage of my career when youth desires to teach before it knows anything itself," said Bertram. "I'm ridiculously dogmatic — you'll have observed that. It is only the people who know practically nothing that are in such a devil of a hurry to teach. If ever I learn anything myself really worth knowing, doubtless I shall be greedy, and keep it to myself."

"You know more than I do, at any rate," answered Loveday. "And I trust you."

They began with Giotto, and proceeded by the way of Pisano on the Campanile to the imitators, Taddeo and Agnolo Gaddi and the more original Giovanni da Milano. Bertram Dangerfield showed as best he could the clash of Sienese and Florentine characters in Milano; but Loveday was not quick to appreciate subtleties of style, and the painter soon noticed it. She wanted to hurry on to the things she already loved, and learn if he loved them too. Day after day he passed over precious treasures in church and gallery, and showed not by a glance or flutter of eyelid that he marked them; but such concentration was foreign to the girl. Sometimes she differed from him, and, finding that he was not contemptuous,

spoke her mind. Then he discovered that it was difficult to change her opinion, and appreciated her courage. When Loveday said, "I like it," he soon perceived that no word of his would make her dislike it. But his logic was always frankly admitted, and she never quarrelled with his knowledge. "Yes," she would say, "I see it's quite out of the upward stream and not the work of a first-class mind, and not Ruler Art in the least bit, but — I like it."

As an example of their differences, she approved the realism of the aforesaid Giovanni da Milano, whereas Bertram did not.

In the Rinuccini Chapel at Santa Croce was a "Raising of Lazarus" with men holding their noses, which Dangerfield resented; but she found no fault in it.

"That way death lies," said he, "death, now as then. Art, and not only painting, is full of people holding their noses to-day. Look what the modern Italian painters are doing, for instance."

"What would you have? Why shouldn't they?" she asked. "It's true. We held our noses going over that ditch yesterday, and you shuddered too."

"Giotto wouldn't have done it. Giottesques are all dust beside Giotto," he declared. He relented at the Carmine, however, and praised Giovanni's noble but ruined "Virgin Enthroned." Giottino he slighted, and turned to Andrea Cione, the mighty Orcagna. "He was in the true line and the greatest from Giotto," said Loveday's guide. "He's always severe and always simple — no Sienese affectations about him. Even more human to me that Giotto himself."

"I'm sure he was human, because he was so humble," she declared. "D'you remember the debate as to who was the greatest from Giotto, and none named him? You would have, if you had been there. Yet he wasn't hurt at their silence."

"Hurt! Rather not — like almost all very big men, he never dreamed that he was doing splendid things. Would he have raised the question if he had thought that his own name might be the answer? Still, he was far the greatest swell since the Tuscan shepherd. I love him because he's on our side: he cares for youth and happiness — a joyous master."

They visited the great tabernacle, and Bertram mourned its site.

"It's choked and smothered here," he said. "Like the Wellington monument by Stevens in St. Paul's Cathedral. There was something of Orcagna in Stevens. I suppose England will discover what Stevens was in the remote future — the very greatest and grandest master of design she has ever entertained — like an angel, unawares."

Occasionally the pictures took them into abstract channels of thought, and they chattered, forgot their work, and wasted their time.

Of Spinello he told her the legend, how that painter was frightened to death by his own Lucifer; and, of course, the story led to ideas.

"It's interesting beyond anything," he said, "to think what effects an artist's work may have on the artist himself. We make things and, meantime, they make us — for good or evil."

"Not only painters, but any sort of artists?" she asked.

"Yes — any creator. It's a criterion in a way. The second-raters are influenced by the world's opinion of their work, and perhaps, unconsciously, if they find they can give the world what it wants, they go on doing so, and are very properly damned in consequence; the first-raters only answer to their own ideals, and the clamour of the world is nothing to them. They give the world what it needs. But even the strong man — be he grim or gay — is as sure to be influenced by his work as other people — influenced for good or evil. In fact, he's more certain to be influenced than anybody else — just as fathers and mothers are hugely influenced by their children. Take this age — why, the fathers and mothers are simply dominated and put in the corner by their children. Nobody has considered what the environment of a long family means to the character of parents — except those who have faced it and felt it."

"What did you do for your unfortunate father and mother?" she asked.

"I did my mother good," he declared, "and my father harm. I enlarged my mother's mind and made her tolerant of ideas that she had been accustomed to hate; but I spoiled my father's temper, which was quite decent till I reached the age of seventeen — poor man. If he'd only lived till I was twenty-three, I should have gone on my knees to him for forgiveness. But he didn't, and died despairing of me."

"The fathers create the children," said Loveday; "and then the children go on helping the fathers to create themselves."

"Helping or hindering."

"You were rather a little opinionated wretch, I expect."

"I was; but we're digressing. The artist is influenced by his work — that's the text. Well, of course he is — it's evolution in a nutshell. Evolution, in the grand style, is merely God trying to go one better; and we artists are all little godlings and all trying to go one better; so naturally our own work influences our characters. And, if there is a God, His work must influence Him."

"Perhaps it does."

"A big speculation, but likely. Leibnitz defines God as the Substance that has no point of view. Pretty good for a metaphysician. At any rate, if He has, He's always shifting it."

"That's flippant," she said.

"Not at all — merely a scientific observation. The Substance changes its mind as often as a woman; it may be feminine, for all we know to the contrary. I believe the militant suffragettes have come to that conclusion. Anyway, you and I shouldn't be what we are, and you wouldn't be thinking as you are thinking, and I shouldn't be making the things I'm making, were it not for what we've been thinking and making in the past. We ripe and ripe, and the live things we make are the foundations of the things to come, until we get to high-water mark. But, thank Nature, we artists never exactly know when we've reached the summit, and so go happily on, and rot and rot, and never guess it, and still toil while our withered old hands can hold our tools and our withered old brains direct them."

Loveday was weary of the Carmine before her

teacher had done with Masaccio and Masolino; but he inflicted his natural and boundless enthusiasm for these masters upon her, and strove to make her share his love for the younger and later painter.

"Remember when he worked, and that he was only as old as I am when he died," said Bertram. "And yet he built the foundations of the greatness of the whole Florentine School. He solved mysteries that none had solved. I think he re-discovered what the Greeks probably knew. He stands as much alone as Turner: 'terrible,' as they call him here — a giant, as great in his own way as Michelangelo, and died almost a boy!"

He fixed a gulf between his favourite genius and the lesser man.

"Masolino you can link at a distance with Angelico," he said, "and you must go to Angelico alone. You don't want me, or anybody, between you and the sweetest genius that ever spread pure colour to the glory of his God. His piety, unfortunately, makes me feel like the fiend when there's holy water about — uneasy. Give me my Masaccio. We should have been happy together."

Therefore Loveday went to Fra Angelico alone, as he bade her, and was joyful and unhappy by turns.

"He made me want to forget thousands of things you have told me," she said. "He made me feel full of human kindness and long to say my prayers again — as I used to say them when I was small."

"Say them to him, then," suggested Bertram. "He'd love to listen, and feel ever so sorry that you had not been a blessed nun to be painted into a masterpiece in his day. But I would not have had

him paint you. Ghirlandajo was the man. How proudly you had footed it among his grand ladies at Santa Maria Novella!"

CHAPTER XIX

VALLOMBROSA

UNDER great heights, full of the murmur and sweetness of the pine, earth rolled away over undulating country, from which sunshine had soaked much colour. It billowed, tawny as the pelt of a lion, but faint green washed it fitfully where faraway vineyards stretched, and white roads cut it every way, into squares and triangles and circles, as they rose and fell and twisted, like threads tangled upon the hills. Cultivation draped rather than clothed this land. It laid no heavy garment upon earth, but spread only a shining and translucent robe between her and the sun's fierce kisses.

Here a company of cypress, dwarfed to a mere splash of darkness, crowned a knoll together or stretched to mark a boundary; here solitary farms shone white and red amongst their terraces and meadows; here a hamlet, with earth-coloured walls and russet roofs, clustered in a valley or girdled some little campanile on a hill-top; and bluer than the olives that belted each height; bluer than Arno, where she wound beneath them; bluer than the blue sky's self, earth's lover, the air, lapped all and melted all together, so that the immense, intricate scene, despite its bewildering detail, wrought out league upon league to the last glimmer of remote snow, was enwrapped, caressed, impregnated by it.

But this far-flung distance of plains and hills rising to the Apennine was not more than a little wedge of the world driven in between the shoulder of high ground and the sky. Heaven, indeed, claimed three-parts of the vision, and the uplifted foreground embraced a large measure of the rest. For there a mountain towered. It ascended by successive slopes, was threaded by pathways, intersected by ravines and torrents, broken by many a crag. And the forest spread over it, tier upon tier, in strophe and antistrophe of darkness and light, in melodies of golden green to the crowns of the land, in passages that steeped the mountain with the gloom of a thunder-cloud. The chestnut woods thronged lower, and their leaves were scarcely unfurled; the beeches blazed to each hill crest, and firs also held their part with them; but the might and mystery of Vallombrosa homed in the pines — the pines that leapt so straight and true to their sombre canopies, that swept the slopes and glens, rose to the high places, and drifted forward in their innumerable battalions like night itself. Generation upon generation they dwell together, from the giants that were seedlings when genius moved amid these shades, to the sprightly promise of forests to come and the infant plantations as yet no greater than the weeds whence they sprang. To shadow and to shelter is their mission; to spread cool purple upon the fiery earth and shield it with their implicated wings against the hurricanes of autumn and winter's snow. Their sobriety is like the frown of dark cliffs fluted with silver, and against their level edges and precipices of close trunks the vernal green of deciduous things rolls and ceases, like

a sea. The savour of them and the music of them fail not to touch a wanderer's heart-strings, for they harbour the incarnate spirit of these glades, and none may stand without tribute of joy and wonder amid their bright columns and look upward to the blue that frets their darkness, or downward to the azure earth far seen between their aisles.

Rivers flash amid the woods; leap sheer and spout their bright threads upon a precipice; linger in little basins of grey marble; vanish and murmur unseen until they twinkle out again. And the humbler folk of the forest throng the waterways, to drape them with sallow and hazel, and adorn them with genista and daphne and great crucifers as white as snow; with mountain strawberry and cyclamen, saxifrage and rue. The sun-shafts find all these things, struggle through the steadfast pines to come to them, and splinter and splash into the secret places, that they may lave each little new-born gem with light. There wander also under the pines sprightly beech saplings, that make a sudden brightness as of laughter in these sombre denes.

"Like dear little babies who have toddled into a party of sad, ancient people," said Loveday.

She knelt beside Miss Annette Neill-Savage and helped Dangerfield to unpack a luncheon-basket. He had brought the party to Vallombrosa in his automobile, that he might see Loveday's emotion at the woods. "Here Milton walked with Galileo — a hard-boiled egg, Loveday, please," said Stella presently — and between the courses of the luncheon she repeated her reflection. But when their meal was finished, to the last dry walnut and glass of sparkling

wine, the lady became more speculative, and wondered how Milton liked it.

"Doubtless a holy joy to such a mind," declared Annette; while Bertram considered the speech of the two great men.

"What a fine conversation Landor would have made of them," said Loveday.

"He did," answered the artist. "But not about them in Vallombrosa. He makes Milton visit the philosopher in prison, with a monk as key-bearer. The young, fiery Milton's wrath at the old man's plight is finely done. Galileo, tinctured with age, declares that the spirit of liberty wakes mad enthusiasm and leaves behind it bitter disappointment. And there's a dramatic line, when Milton hopes the great man's sentence will be short, and he answers, 'It may be, or not, as God wills. It is for life.' There's a saying of Galileo's too: 'We may know that there are other worlds, and we may hope that they are happier.'"

"It sounds a thing one ought to read," declared Annette, and Bertram nodded.

"There's fine, implicit drama when Galileo regrets that the cell is so small for Milton's feet. You see the poet-to-be, hot with passion before this villainy, tramping like a young tiger up and down the prison, and old Galileo watching him."

He laughed suddenly.

"Another good thing! Milton, in his scorn for all that's frozen and lifeless, says that 'an academician, a dunghill, and a worm are three sides of an equilateral triangle!'"

After luncheon Miss Neill-Savage was not ashamed

to hint at a nap, and Annette, who had also walked enough, proposed to smoke a cigarette and watch over her sister. Loveday and the painter wandered away together, but when they had departed Stella did not go to sleep; instead she sighed, and said that it was all very stupid and utterly wrong.

"They're falling in love with each other as fast as two emotional creatures can," she said, "and, of course, if there's trouble, we shall be blamed for it. We have no authority, but if I had, I should certainly exercise it and take her home."

Her sister was less sentimental.

"You needn't worry," she declared. "It's harmless enough. He's not in the least in love with her, and, even if he was, he's a gentleman."

"He may be, but that's often the first thing a man forgets when—"

"He won't. She likes him better than he likes her, I fancy; but Loveday's a clever girl under her skin. In fact, her ingenuousness is rather put on. Anyway, she knows which side her bread is buttered. No sane woman would miss her destiny for the sake of a harum-scarum painter. What's somebody else's fame compared to her own as mistress of Vanestowe?"

The boy and girl did not climb far. Soon they sat down together on a stone, and she murmured of the beauty round her. Then she bade him pick flowers and gather roots to send home; and he covered himself with glory by digging up the corm of a cyclamen whose fading leaves betrayed it.

"Where there are pines there is always sweetness," said Loveday; and she made him dig up a dozen of

the little seedling conifers which scattered the ground.

"I shall send them in a box to Fry," she said, "and they must be grown on. I should think they would take about two hundred years to reach their full size."

"Your great-great-grandchildren will play under them."

"What d'you think of up here?" she asked, when they fell into a silence presently.

"Of the olden time," he said. "I've just got an idea as I lighted this cigar — an idea about the ancient gods. You think of them in these high places. They were not one, but many — that's the point to consider; and another thing, they weren't separated in kind from man, only in degree. Pindar says that men and gods sprang all from the same mother, Earth; though he adds that the race of men is nought, and the 'brazen heaven abideth.' But it wasn't all one way. They even chaffed their gods sometimes, like little brothers cheek big ones; and they considered it quite reasonable that their divinities should give as well as take, and even bend to human opinion now and then. Moira was above the gods, and greater than they for that matter. The *rationale* of paganism in its bearing on human life is jolly sane. Don't you think so?"

"I'll see if I do, after you've explained," answered Loveday.

"Well, the logical mind of the Golden Age was called to build a working creed from prehistoric myth, and it evolved a pantheon that should meet the many problems and contradictions of existence. The dogma of one watchful, loving, and paternal Deity

had no temptation for the Greek genius, since the events of every day and hour convinced him of its futility. No single god might rationally meet the case, but given a house of gods — a family of divinities moved by various interests, at sharp variance amongst themselves, vested with varying supernatural powers and profoundly interested in mankind and his fate; then is unfolded a most plausible theory of human life with its disabilities, contradictions, triumphs, tragic paradoxes, and appalling dilemmas from which escape there is none, and action only a choice of horrors."

"I see that."

"Granted these greater brothers and sisters of humanity and the others — those sub-celestials with human blood in their veins — then you get the whole splendid pageant of Greek and Latin mythology — rich for moralists and artists and everybody. On that poetic basis you can explain the whole show; but given one supreme, consistent, and omnipotent Being, you can explain nothing. I'll bet Goethe felt that, and Landor, and Swinburne. They were both braver than Goethe. He hedged a bit at the finish. But the old nearly always hedge," asserted the painter.

They wandered presently where a little shrine stood beside a steep path of cobble-stones, and Bertram read a Latin inscription that told how good San Giovanni Gualberto was flung headlong by Satan over the crags to the torrent below, but found himself none the worse for the adventure.

"No doubt the great god Pan scented brimstone and waited by the waterfall, and caught the saint

when he fell, and got a splendid blessing for his trouble," said Loveday.

There came mountain men passing to the valley with great bundles of brush and beechwood charcoal, which they carried upon their backs. Being questioned gravely concerning the miracle of the saint, they confirmed it.

The painter gave them each a Tuscan cigar — tobacco that he carried always for presents — and they clattered down the cobble-stones to Vallombrosa, the happier for his gift.

"Francis of Assisi is my patron saint," declared Bertram, "so I beg you'll make him yours. He is a most blessed and beautiful spirit, and had blessed and beautiful ideas. The sun was his brother; death was his sister. When no longer he could see his brother shining in the heaven, he would shut his eyes and go to sleep with his sister. He of all the mystics knit man closest into the very web of Nature; but he could not feel that man was the only thing that mattered among all the other wonderful things in the world. That was what I love him for. Even my heroes, the humanists, have not his poetry and fire. They think man is everybody, and I don't. The birds, and the beasts, and the strange, silent, unknowable people of the river, who never shut their eyes and whose blood is cold — Saint Francis claimed kinship and brotherhood with them all. And therefore, in his simple enthusiasm and fervour, he brought to them the very best and greatest thing that he had to bring — Jesus. It seemed to him that not a living being but must be the better for his Master's message. If ever he came here, I think his voice must

have risen among these glorious trees to utter the name of Christ for them too."

"What a fairyland the world must have been to him," said Loveday. "I wish I'd lived then. A saint is just what I'm always wanting to put my faith in and reverence and trust."

"It's a far cry from St. Francis to Goethe," he answered; "and yet, of course, Goethe is more useful to-day than St. Francis. You ask for something to waken faith and reverence. He'll tell you that there are only four things to reverence: those above you, those below you, those equal with you, and — yourself. Which really is only St. Francis over again, for he loved all things, both great and small. But the highest you can reach — the faith to move mountains — is the faith in your kind. Goethe was no materialist, but no mystic either. He said that though subject to mechanical necessities, as being live creatures compacted of elements, we can yet move on another plane too, and fly, with wings that will carry us above the stars. He found that happen to himself; and so he had to chronicle it, and show that the link between temporal and eternal lies within, and that the mechanical chains don't signify a straw. The only chains that matter are those we forge ourselves."

"But you don't believe that?" she asked.

"No," he answered, "not at present. Because I have forged chains for myself. I am a monist. I chose those particular fetters because my mind finds itself most comfortable in them. You must dress your mind in some clothes, as well as your body, if you're not a savage. A thinking being must think.

I might stop being a monist to-morrow; but at present there is nothing else that suits and supports my mind. For me 'free will' is one of man's supreme delusions."

"Don't begin that again. You said so before, and I said you were wrong," declared Loveday.

"Then of course I am wrong. So let your wings carry you above the stars. Reverence St. Francis and believe in yourself, for he knows that you'll never find a lovelier thing to believe in."

He paid her these sudden compliments sometimes, and they made her laugh, for they were always uttered in a tone so indifferent that any charm of statement they might possess was lost in the manner of making them.

They returned to the sisters, and found both anxious to start homeward.

"We drink tea at half-past four with friends," said Stella; and as they returned to the automobile, Annette surprised them.

"It is most beautiful here to-day — an experience to remember," she said. "But my imagination runs on to another picture. I have been trying to imagine these eternal forests, 'when the Apennine walks abroad with the storm.'"

"It would be terrible and glorious," declared Loveday.

"But not a sight you could hope to see in personal comfort, and therefore not a sight I should wish to see at all," added Annette.

Dangerfield made no comment, but henceforth, in secret with Loveday, he alluded to the younger sister as "the Apennine."

"She doesn't quote as much as you do, anyway," was her reply.

Homeward they flew, setting a trail of dust hanging a mile behind them and marking the zig-zag road.

"The patience and forbearance of the people to endure us!" cried Loveday. "I hate to think how we are choking their little windows and spoiling the very air they breathe. Who are we to dare to come among them with this foul, bellowing thing? I wonder they don't turn round and cut our tyres to pieces and block our way and silence us."

"They are meek and gentle as their own great steers," Bertram answered. "They have not reached the fighting, English stage yet. They don't think; they merely endure. Their time is to come."

The automobile slid downwards among the chestnut woods to the vines, where they flung tender shadows over the sun-scorched earth, and where the limpid blue of the flax and the brave lavender of the iris fields made Loveday gasp for joy.

"You want a place as big as Italy to grow flowers properly — Devonshire's too small," she said.

CHAPTER XX

THE STUDIO

DANGERFIELD'S villa stood in the Corso Regina Elena, but his studio was at San Miniato. Here, before five o'clock, Stella Neill-Savage and Loveday arrived, and he kept them waiting. A girl brought them upstairs, to find the painter in a long Tuscan blouse of sponge-coloured canvas, much spattered and smeared with divers hues. He was working, and a model sat on a dais in the middle of the studio.

"Forgive me, but there are fifteen minutes more," said Bertram. "Play about; there's plenty to amuse you."

Miss Neill-Savage, slightly flattered at the idea of being told to "play about" by a boy of six-and-twenty, settled herself upon a purple cushion in a great walnut chair of state and drew forth her fan; while Loveday, with shy glances at the model, made an excursion round the workshop.

It was a large and lofty room, lighted by a great window northward, beneath which opened a lesser window within reach of the eye. A mighty view of Florence and Arno spread here, and now it shone in the mellowing colour of evening, and reminded Loveday of her first vision.

A polished stone floor belonged to the studio, and it was half-covered with faded Persian rugs and a

strip of rose-coloured grass matting. The walls were a cool grey; and a great screen on wheels, at present behind the dais, had been painted of the same colour. A stove with a snaky pipe that wound away through the roof, stood in one corner, and works of art were arranged with some method round the chamber. There were full-sized casts of certain Greek favourites, and in the case of the Venus of Melos, the Apoxyomenos of Lysippos, the Discobolus of Myron, and the Apollo Sauroctonos, the copies were of marble. A marble Duke of Urbino from the Sacristy, a marble Hermes of Praxiteles, and a marble Venus Victrix were also disposed on heavy pedestals, together with one or two unfamiliar statues of Bertram's special affection; and between the statues stood easels, their canvases covered with blinds of a rose-grey fabric. Upon the walls were the usual studio notes — sketches in oils and chalk and charcoal, and among them hung a few framed oils by Italian painters — light, bright renderings of Tuscan scenery. A great curtain of dark blue and gold fell over a doorway, and in one corner stood a pile of mingled pots — some of rough local ware in the biscuit stage, some rich with a transparent glaze, some red and black Etruscan, some of dim green glass from Eastern tombs. A dozen bas-reliefs hung upon the walls — mostly copies of Donatello, or Greek funereal steles.

It was a workshop, but more than a workshop. The beauty of the whole, the peace of the colour, and distinction of the forms had not happened by accident.

Loveday noticed a portrait of the little serving-girl. It was a half-length nude in pastel, with

wonderful light glimmering over the brown skin and dark hair. There was another pastel of Arno on a grey day, winding sadly with turbid and yellow waters under naked boughs. The single smudge of a boat on the river completed the composition. Elsewhere another pastel held her — a long road stretching between broken walls, subdued and empty, then ending in a little magic passage of azure and pale amber, where sunlight broke through and found the face of a cottage. It was like an opal set in a great margin of dim pearl.

Loveday peeped behind another little curtain to find a window of old stained glass. It opened upon the east of the studio, and glimmered like wine. The colours entranced her. She had seen them already in the dusty windows of the Duomo.

The painter's table, with its litter of paints and palettes and brushes, appeared to be the only untidy place in the studio.

"May I come and look at you now?" asked Loveday, and he begged her to do so.

The model was a man of venerable and dignified appearance. His silvery hair was thrown off his forehead and hung in ripples; his beard was white; and his brown face, withered brow, sunk cheek, and sad but thoughtful brown eyes completed a picture of noble old age.

The old man was clad in a flowing robe of rose-red, from which loose sleeves of white appeared. A gilt chain was flung round his neck, and his distinguished hand — a wonder of great veins — held an old tome of leather embossed with gold.

"Jacopo is the biggest humbug in Italy," said

Bertram. "He is said to have killed his wife and done all sorts of abominable things. He was left for dead at Fiesole two years ago after a brawl over a woman. But he's as tough as a crocodile and as wily as a fox."

Then in Italian he bade the model lift up his eyes, whereupon Jacopo cast an expression as of a seraphic vision upon his countenance and regarded the ceiling with such rapture of pure piety that Loveday clapped her hands and gave him a lira. Jacopo was dismissed anon, and Bertram prepared to doff his blouse, but Loveday begged him to keep it on.

"I've never seen you in it before. It helps me to realise you really do work," she said. "Sometimes I can't believe you really do."

"One cannot imagine a rich artist," asserted Miss Neill-Savage. "When they work for a living they are merely artists; if they are wealthy and still make pictures, then the world feels it is rather a condescension on their part, and bows reverently and calls them brilliant amateurs, like Brabazon."

"There's always a gulf fixed between amateurs and professionals all the same," said Loveday, "however brilliant the amateur may be. Mr. Dangerfield's a professional, and always would have been. It's only an accident he's so ridiculously rich."

"I'd wish an artist ambition and perseverance, then money," he said. "The first two, of course, are vital, and the third is death without them; but given ambition that scorches you and eats you alive, and perseverance that makes you work to the very limit of your love and your strength, then money is an enormous advantage and priceless boon. At least,

so I've found it. Hunger and necessity have produced great art, but not the greatest and purest and most perfect. The artist who needs any other goad than the inner fire burning to get out, belongs to a second order at best."

He brought them a sheaf of copies made by himself during the past five years. They were mostly of Andrea d'Agnolo and Titian.

"I went to Madrid for Titian," he told them. "But that copy of 'Sacred and Profane Love' I did, of course, in Rome."

"I read a review of your work somewhere that declared you had found a little of the secret of Venetian gold," said Miss Neill-Savage.

But he denied it.

"I didn't copy to find secrets," he said, "only to strengthen my hand and teach me patience. It did that. I used to get awfully down on my luck, and sometimes envy the brilliant chaps who only talk about pictures instead of paint them, and sit in the seats of the mighty and thunder out the law and the prophets to us poor wretches who are fighting to make things. But then I read a book of Lucan's. *A Dream* it's called, and the great man shows with cynical indifference what led him to give up creation proper and become a mere critic and literary trifler. Two women appear before him in his dream: one is dirty, plastered with clay, ill-clad, careworn, haggard, with hard hands and weary eyes; the other is attired in fine raiment and minces in her going. She is lovely, delicate, refined, self-possessed, and distinguished. The first woman is Art; the second, Culture; and sad-eyed, back-bent Art strives for the

Syrian's soul, pleads for it, breathes the names of the giants to him — Phidias, Polyclitus, Myron, Praxiteles. Culture meantime remarks that, when all is done and said, the artist is only a slave; that the august Phidias himself is no more than a workman who toils with his hands and frets away his manhood and vigour and endowment of life in battering of stones. So Lucian abandons art for cheap fame and pelf, and turns from an artist's work, which is making of things, to the easier business of prattling about them. It pays better, and wants only a little practice to deceive everybody — but the artists themselves. Any fool can do it in six weeks. 'Technique,' that's the blessed word; but the men who matter laugh at it."

"I thought 'technique' really embraced everything," said Stella Neill-Savage.

"Everything and nothing, as you may understand the word," he answered. "No big man breaks his shins on technique to-day — in any art. I'm a formalist myself, and believe that you must have bones to stand up and take your place in the world. But time will decide about all the new things — as to whether they are strong enough to resist the impact of a century or so. Oscar Wilde said that 'technique is personality — not to be taught or learned, only to be understood.' Goethe in another sense, declares frankly that technique kills art. We don't bother about the technique of the giants any more than they did themselves. Ruler Art, in fact, makes its own rules. Be an inventor and 'damn the consequences,' even if Culture damns you — as Mr. Balfour has just politely damned modern novelists in general, because

they find life rather dark and difficult and scorn the line of least resistance. Great art is the lightning of genius playing over our human environment; and you can no more decide how the art is to declare itself than you can dictate where the lightning shall fall."

But the prime interest for Loveday was the painter's own pictures, and now he showed them to her. Some were finished, and all were far advanced save one.

He turned to that first — a drawing roughed in of a nude Venus.

"This is just a sketch for it, and no more. I've got everything for it but Venus herself; and as it's going to be my masterpiece, I'm in no hurry."

"Explain it," said Stella.

"Just the old subject — Venus coming ashore out of the foam. You'd say it couldn't be painted any more; but it's going to be. She'll feel earth making her lovely feet tingle in a moment. There's something from Leonidas of Tarentum in the Greek anthology that says what I mean. The maiden Venus squeezing the water out of her hair with sun-bright fingers and leaping out of her sea-mother's breast into the passion of the sunshine and the warmth and wonder and joy of earth. On the shore is an old, mellow, wise skull, a lovely colour, like the black bread the *contadini* eat. Venus says that life is beautiful. The skull says that life is short."

"You ought to have a butterfly, to say that life is not all," suggested Loveday.

"No," he answered, "I won't pretend anything I don't know is true. My girl Venus will ride on a nautilus shell that I found among the treasures at the Bargello — the colour of opal set in gold."

"I shall like Botticelli's cockle-shell better," said Loveday.

"I dare say you will. I have thought a much more glorious Venus rising from the sea than I can possibly paint. We all, from the Greeks downward, dream better things than can be made of matter, just as Shakespeare thought better things than he could put into words."

"But you haven't thought a better Venus than Botticelli's?" said Loveday.

"An artist's visions are his own. You can't have a study of comparative inspirations. I wouldn't change my vision for anybody's — or my inspiration either."

"Your inspiration?"

"Yes — you've got to hear about that. But the dreams of the Greeks! Think of them. Do you suppose that Phidias was satisfied with his Pallas Athene of gold and ivory, or the Parthenon pediments? Not he. He looked back to the dream and sighed. Think of the visions of Praxiteles stretching their hands to him through the marble — never to be rescued. The medium kills — that's the curse of art. None ever masters it. The mightiest are broken on their medium sometimes — like Ixion on his wheel."

He showed them a finished picture called "Nature regarding man" — a sorrowful, mighty figure brooding beside a man who slept amid evidences of destruction and death, painted with much power and with lovely colouring.

"Just a mother finding her naughty child tired out and sound asleep, after he's done all the mischief

he can. 'Asleep to gather strength for more mischief,'' he told them.

"It's solemn, and the colour is beautiful; but it's so strange," said Loveday.

"I'll explain all some day, when you're in a patient mood," he answered.

"Is it just maternal sorrow over a failure, or sneaking, material pride at man's strength and power to turn everything else upside down?" asked Stella. "It might be either."

"No, I'm not so subtle," he said. "The sneaking pride is a splendid idea; but it doesn't belong to this. I picture Nature just asking herself, in a piano sort of moment, whether man was quite worth while—whether, in fact, the game of conscious intelligence was worth the awful candle that man lighted to play it by. She decides sorrowfully that it was not. She feels rather as Frankenstein felt before his monster with a mind. I think she's considering whether it won't be better to polish him off before he gets worse."

"And yet you say you're no pessimist, Mr. Dangerfield?"

Bertram shook his head.

"I was when I painted that. One denies no mood. Moods are the roads along which an artist's soul makes its expeditions into the unknown. This man, you see, does all things, and even lifts his hand against his mother. He defies her rules and scorns her conditions, and tears the heart out of her. So she beholds him with shuddering eyes and puzzles before the terrific problem of his future. Here's another mood. This I call 'Demeter and Abbas.'"

It was a small canvas, in which the goddess had come thirsting to her fountain, and the little boy, Abbas, was deriding her. Bertram told the sequel of the legend, and Loveday drank it in greedily.

"How delicious!" she said. "And what a dear, wicked little thing you've made him! But the great goddess ought to have had more sense of humour than to punish a tiny child so dreadfully."

"It was before she lost Persephone, perhaps," he answered. "Sorrow had not sweetened her divine soul. But goddesses — even in the melting mood — are ticklish things."

"I love the light in your pictures," declared Loveday. "It is not so sad as the subjects seem to be. One would think the sun was always setting."

"Here it has not risen," he answered, and showed her another. "That's going to London next week. I call it 'Ignorance and Terror.' Another mother and child. Ignorance is the mother of Terror, and there will be no terror in the world when Reason has banished superstition and thrown a great light through the meaning of things."

A haggard, neolithic woman sat with her baby on her lap in the chill light before morning. The woman pointed at a formless, hideous something — tree-stump or monster; the child wept.

"When the sun rises over those mountains it will all be explained," said the artist.

"But what *is* the horror?" asked Loveday. "What is that ghastly, formless object you half see and half feel?"

"I don't know," he answered. "I don't know myself till the dawn is clearer. It may be a stock

or stone, the sort of thing the first man made into a god or devil."

"Everybody will want to know what it is all about, and they'll say you've painted a puzzle picture," prophesied Miss Neill-Savage. He laughed at that.

"All works of art ought to have mystery in them. Now we'll go out on to the *loggia* and see the picture I shall never paint but always dream about — Firenze at sunset. Meantime, what do you think of this picture?"

It was a girl's head against a dim green light — a shadowy loveliness of hair died into the background where olives misted under the stars, and about the bent head three fireflies hung, streaking the gloom. One drew its little lamp across the darkness of her hair.

"How perfect!" cried his younger visitor. "What a joy of a girl! You didn't miss that dream, at any rate."

"Only an impression. I should like to do it again — if you'll let me," he said. "I call it 'Madonna delle Lucciole.'"

"Good gracious, Loveday, it's you!" said Stella. "And you never saw it was! Or was that simply affectation?"

"I'm not like that," declared she. "Say it isn't, Bertram."

"It isn't, of course. You're a million times lovelier than that. Yet you were the model. It's painted, as it were, 'after' you, not from you. So I saw you at the Warners after dinner that evening, when we were watching the fireflies at their *podere* — just outlined against the last of the light. It's

only a note for a real picture — if you'll sit for it."

"It's an inspiration, and you'll never do it half as well again," she told him; but he assured her that with her help he would.

CHAPTER XXI

LOVEDAY TO RALEGH

"ALVERGO ATHENA,
"FIRENZE.

"MY DEAREST RALEGH,—

"I must try and give you a glimpse of the great Duomo here — one of the very noblest buildings in Italy or the world. Standing under its walls is like standing under a great cliff on a seashore — a cliff that towers up, all pencilled with delicate patterns and washed with lovely colours. One feels that it is as old as the world, and that it has faced everything that came, and made itself more and more beautiful and mellow. Time has melted its rose and pearl and green together, and overlaid them with stains of old ripe gold, the colour of apricots. For clefts and crannies in this cliff-face are big doors and windows, which break it with deep embrasures and twisted pillars and for sea-fowl there are the white and grey and mottled pigeons that breed here, and bask on the ledges and mouldings, and preen their wings on the heads of the stone saints. Around about is the ceaseless din and roar of traffic like a sea, for this wonderful Cathedral is lifted on no height and not separated from the life around it. Mean houses elbow it, mean tram-lines wrap it round and round with steel ribbons, whereon little gaudy red and

yellow trams circle, clanging and rattling. The steel network flashes hotly in the great piazza before the Cathedral, and the people surge every day — rich and poor, busy and lazy, silent and noisy. But most of them are noisy, for they really cannot get on without noise. I expect that I shall be fearfully noisy when I come home again, and want a whip to crack and a bell to jangle.

"I love to see the girls who trip about in pairs, like twin flowers on one stem. They are so pretty, so trim, and so plump — delicious little women — 'husband-high,' as we say in Devon. They wear their hair up in a great mound, or sometimes braided in many a pretty fashion, and they carry their dainty heads proudly, as such beautiful little gems well may. At their belts you see a rose, or cornflower, or carnation and they go arm in arm sometimes, and sometimes hand in hand. Then there are the soldiers, whose bright uniforms make the brilliant streets brighter yet; and — a real joy — yesterday was flower-market day, and I went and spent an hour there. Fry would have laughed at the things they had to sell; but the roses were good, and a few other plants that you do at Vanestowne in a feeble sort of way. Here the 'half-hardies' blossom and enjoy it; not as with us, in the sulks and meagrely, as though under compulsion to do something they hated. But they don't know what a rhododendron means here — tell Fry that. I'm so sorry his seedling turned out a failure. I had such a characteristic letter from him. 'The seedling is rubbish,' he wrote, 'and Stacey's wife's baby boy has been born without feet. We are cheering each other up.' He seemed to think

the catastrophes were about equal. I've written to poor Mrs. Stacey and said that very likely her baby will be wonderfully clever or something, to make up for such a fearful loss. Of course, the kind thing to do with the poor mite would be to treat it as Fry treated the rhododendron, and put it painlessly to sleep. But that's a sort of kindness I know you won't approve. Perhaps the child really will justify its existence; but can it with such a father?

"I'm beginning to get a little of the atmosphere and spirit of this dear, wonderful place. Really, there are a great many things that would interest you about it. It is an important industrial centre, though not so strong and potent in the affairs of Italy as once it was. The river would interest you — not so much the fish, which are rather small and feeble, as a rule — but the way it brings work and money to the poor of Florence. They are always fetching up sand and stones from it, and the supply is renewed by every flood from the mountains. Then they go out in boats and collect the deposits of the river, for which there is a ceaseless demand; and in old time the Arno was the great artery of trade, too. Timber came down it in rafts, and little vessels plied for many a mile, even to the sea. The vanished folk actually invented a saint, called Gorgone, and invoked his protection at the most dangerous rapids and gorges where they worked.

"Firenze simply pulses with the new born out of the old. Its present is linked closely to its beautiful past.

"I think, though you have never taken pictures very seriously, you would do so out here. Pictures

creep into your life after a time, if you care for them. There are pictures here — the ones I love best of all — that I go to see all alone sometimes; and they talk to me — they really do! I suppose that is what you feel when you go to church.

"I'm just dimly beginning to realise what Italian means. It is a most wonderful tongue, and the Tuscan Italian is the most glorious live language in the world to-day — for subtlety and music and power to express the shadow of a shade of meaning. But no foreigner ever fathoms it, and only poets and artists of words can even sound the stops of the wonderful organ. There are people here, Bertram tells me, who take the same delight in a phrase, or a perfect jewel of words fitted together, as you would in a good right and left with the partridges. Italians think English rather a lumbering language, though well enough suited to our lumbering nation. I struggle away at the beginnings and my teacher is very patient and a splendid linguist.

"And now I must stop before I bore you to death.

"We shall be here for ages yet, thank goodness; and then Stella wants to go to the Italian Lakes, and Annette to the Swiss ones, so I don't know what will happen. Of course, I vote for Como or Maggiore.

"Your devoted

"LOVEDAY.

"P. S.— We visited Bertram's studio a few days ago. It was most interesting. He is a tremendous worker, and has wonderful ideas. He says that every picture ought to have an idea. He did a jolly head of me — all green and blue and purple and mysterious, with fireflies dancing round it — far too lovely

for me. You ought to buy it! He calls it 'Madonna delle Lucciole.' Get Nina to translate that for you!"

CHAPTER XXII

ANDREA D'AGNOLO

FLORENCE basked in the sunshine of afternoon, and the domes of her churches, swinging round in a semi-circle from San Spirito to the Cathedral, carried up the russet of a thousand roofs into the sky upon their orbs. Thunderclouds hung heavy over Fiesole and cast a darkness there, but all else to the distant hills was full of light. Behind Monte Morello a pillar of silver cloud ascended, and the sky shone very blue.

A little open chamber, perched amid the housetops opposite the uplifted platform of the Pitti, was painted blue also, so that it brought the sky colour with heightened tone down into the midst of the burning roofs that sloped away round about.

Loveday and Bertram stood on the loggia of the Pitti to rest their eyes before returning to del Sarto, for the day was sacred to that master. The morning had been spent with him at the Uffizi; and since Bertram had decided that afternoon was the right and proper time to see him there, they had come, knowing no need of rest or siesta.

"They say he hasn't a soul, and belongs to the second-rates," declared the artist; "I say that he's the most perfect, pure painter we know, and nearer the Greeks than any of them; and Browning said he was perfect, too. I don't like Browning's poem,

all the same. Andrea may not have been a great man, and he may have wrecked himself for the sake of that rag, his wife; but how many artists are great men? Was Raphael? Was Botticelli?"

"To be a great artist is to be a great man," she declared; but he would not grant it.

"You often gather grapes from thorns and figs from thistles where art is born; he was a weak spirit; but a mighty painter. And if he'd married an angel instead of a harlot, it wouldn't have made any difference to his art. The oil decides the flame."

"But," Loveday said, "a flame can burn better and brighter in pure air than foul."

He could not answer that.

"Anyway, his great pictures deserve to rank with the best in the world as painting," he declared; "and the Madonna of the Harpies — it didn't want them to link him to the Greeks — is the picture that I would first have in all Firenze. And as to soul — if he had no more interest in souls than Apelles, why the deuce should he bother about them, or pretend he had? His wretched wife hadn't a soul, and, rightly or wrongly, he chose her for his fountain of beauty, so there's no more to be said."

He pointed out the "Dispute," his favourite "Assumption," and the "Deposition." The last he ranked with the Uffizi Madonna for greatness; then he wearied Loveday with his opinions, and, finding that he had done so, amused her.

"Come and see a Holy Family by Bronzino," he said. "It's very interesting, because the Blessed Mother was evidently painted from a statue — even to her hair. But the great thing in it is the Sleeping

Christ — a fine baby. If ever I am a father, I shall want such another as that."

"And his dear little toes curl over each other, just like a real baby!" said Loveday, as she regarded the picture.

They admired the adorable child; then a thought entered her mind, and as she looked at Bertram's dark skin and flashing eyes, she laughed to herself.

"If ever you had a baby son, he'd not be such a fair, starry, creamy little joy as this," she said. "He'd be like — I'll show you —"

She led him elsewhere, then dropped him the ghost of a curtsy, and pointed to Caravaggio's Slumbering Cupid — the brown Love with a Puck nose and plump body, who sleeps soundly as ever baby slept, upon the downy concave of his own grey wing.

"What a live little wretch — you can hear him snore," cried Bertram. "And what a gem of a picture. Well done, Lombardy! It's a masterpiece of *chiaroscuro* — a glorious baby — one of the elect."

"A little black pig compared to the other," declared Loveday.

"And you think, if I ever had a son, he'd be like that?"

"He would," she assured him. "Of course, he'd grow up handsome, and very likely win the Inter-'Varsity hundred yards some day, which his father couldn't do; but he'd begin like that — without the wings."

"But his nose. No son of mine could possibly have such a nose," he pleaded.

"He might — he really might," she assured him.

"The noses of children are most weird and puzzling. You never know how they're going to happen."

"Come and sit down and talk for ten minutes before they turn us out. I shan't marry — never. My child must be a love child, like Leonardo or Giorgione — and move among fine people on the strength of his father. It's a fool's trick to marry, and the biggest fool's trick of all is to marry a handsome woman; and, of course, I couldn't marry any other sort, so there's an end of it."

"What's the matter with a handsome woman for a wife?" she asked.

"You're naturally interested; and I'll break it to you gently that everything's the matter with her. She is always the most jealous, and the hardest to please, and the cruellest. A pretty woman is like a rich one: she never learns the truth about men. It's hidden from her. Beauty is a veil that comes between her and reality, and transforms men in the eyes of the beautiful. So the poor, lovely wretches have to take us on faith; and the result naturally sours them. They are shocked when they find that the male desire for novelty is no respecter of persons, and a pretty woman wears no better than a plain one. Not as well, as a rule, because she, trusting to her beauty, has never bothered about the things that do wear. A beauty may reign a reasonable time for men; but she won't wear for the man that's won her. She must charm or resign, and it's a curious and dismal fact that a lovely woman whose charms are more than skin-deep is very rare. The converse holds true. Don't let any sane woman marry the handsome man who is going about selling his fine carcase in the best

market. She'll rue it as surely as she does it; for that sort of male is generally tinkling brass."

"Are there no exceptions?" asked Loveday.

"An exception asks the question. You'll charm the vanished Vanes when your turn comes for a corner in the family vault. You'll go among them like Circe among the swine, and enchant their dusty bones till they rattle round you and terrify the belated traveller as he wends through the churchyard! But you're the phœnix, the pearl of price; and you're already bespoken for the master jewel in the crown of a noble knight. There is not such another as you. So I must go my way and gather my roses where I can, and drop them when they wither."

"Rubbish!"

"So it is. My wife is Art, and, as a matter of fact, if a man's a real artist his wife can be only a mistress, as Lady Dangerfield said."

She shuddered, while he talked on recklessly to shock her; but presently she caught him up.

"You speak as if there was no such thing as sin in the world," she said.

"And what then? What is sin? A stone flung at the strong by the weak — flung from behind. D'you think I recognise sin? Good heavens! where would it land me? In the bogs of remorse and the quicksands of regret and all sorts of other sticky places. There was no sin in Greece till Plato came with his 'making life one long study for death'— death, the thing that doesn't want a thought till it comes! I hate Plato. He was a traitor to Greece. He discovered the soul, and invented a hell for it. He makes thought morbid and love disgusting.

He was a Christian before Christ. Sin's an impure human invention; but strangle your mother-taught conscience, and you'll soon settle sin. Let the clean past guide you there, not the mean present — the past and your own heart, the heart that Nature put under your ribs and that Christianity calls desperately wicked. Look to those whose hearts beat right, and they'll tell you that they know crime and passion and wrath and hatred and vengeance and love — but not sin. That's a thing spawned out of Christianity — to make men all equal in the sight of God — the God who made all men unequal! Turn the gleam of philosophy on to sin, and you'll find it vanishes like a Jack-o'-lantern at the first chill touch of morning," he asserted.

"You're past praying for," she said.

"I wish you were past praying," he answered.

There was a pause, and Loveday spoke again:

"If I believed half you say to me, or if I believed that you believed it, I should grow very unhappy. I wonder who has to answer for it, your father or your mother?"

"Schopenhauer says that character comes from the father, brains from the mother; and though I daresay the modern experts in heredity have exploded that, it's true in my case. But, after all, you can't sort out the heap that goes to make character and portion out the praise and blame."

"One's character is a sort of Pandora's box," suggested Loveday.

"Yes," he answered, "and you are a lucky man or woman if, after you've rummaged your character to the bottom and found what is good and what is

rubbish, you can still come across a gleam of hope in your inheritance."

"Then I'm one of the lucky ones; and so are you," she answered.

"So far. But you're only twenty-two, or some ridiculous age, and I'm not quite twenty-seven. Is the hope merely gilt or gold? How many hope anything after they're forty?"

"Forty's nothing," declared Loveday. "Adam Fry's still hoping at seventy. Now they're coming to turn us out, so let us go and have some tea. I've promised to meet Stella and Annette."

But he would not.

"They think you see too much of me as it is," he told her; "I read it in their accusing eyes."

CHAPTER XXIII

RALEGH TO LOVEDAY

" VANESTOWE,
" CHUDLEIGH,
" DEVON.

" MY DEAREST LOVEJOY,—

" I appreciate your picturesque descriptions of Florence, and am glad the place awakens such interest and pleasure in you.

" There is no doubt that much you say is just, and that it is the English passion for criticising that often gets us into trouble. We have to consider that, as you have the sense to do.

" There is no objection, I suppose, to your calling Dangerfield by his Christian name, though neither was there any necessity that I can see. You will know what line to take in your relations with him. The man is an outsider — to say it not unkindly. I mean that he has thrown in his lot with another order than his own, and devoted himself to other work than would have been considered proper to his social rank a few generations ago. But no doubt I am old-fashioned in my feeling that the learned professions ought to have claimed him. He is the first Dangerfield that one has heard of outside the Services or the Church.

" Life goes on steadily here, and there is hope of a

good hay harvest. I am letting them have the Lower Glebe for the Agricultural Show this year. The concession has given a good deal of satisfaction, and, I hope, may help to improve relations in some directions. It was the idea of Ross, and my mother frankly disliked it; but I am glad to say she is no longer averse to the plan.

"One cannot look round with thoughtful eyes and not feel that great changes threaten England. We have given the people education, and I fear, for some years to come, that they will find the gift a two-edged sword and wound themselves as often as they wound us. There is no doubt in my mind that the ideal form of Government is a benevolent autocracy, *i. e.* Government for the people — not by the people, but by a sympathetic aristocracy moving on a plane of high tradition and animated by sympathy and imagination.

"But the proletariat cares not for high tradition, and it rejects and distrusts our sympathy. It turns to its own demagogues, and they — I do not judge their motives — spurn tradition, open the sluices, and are in most unseemly haste to remove their neighbours' landmarks and ignore the difference between *meum* and *tuum*.

"In the darkness it is a source of consolation to me that the revolution will be bloodless. Providence, in Whom I trust absolutely, will order things for the best from a standpoint veiled in clouds beyond the mind of man to reach. But while granting that right will happen, because a good and just God is responsible for the progress of human affairs, we must not be supine, nor neglect to advance our own convictions,

nor cease to labour for what we believe to be the right line of progress and amelioration. God helps those who help themselves. Life is profoundly interesting; but to us, of the old brigade, it is also very sad, for much is happening that runs counter to our inherited beliefs and opinions. I see men of birth around me, the very blood in whose veins is running sour under these disabilities — temperate men becoming intemperate; logical men becoming illogical; religious men beginning to doubt whether this is indeed the best of all possible worlds. A sitting of Parliament nowadays still begins with prayers; but how often it ends with curses!

"On the Bench one sees many a glimpse of the bitter class prejudice now spreading like a poisonous germ into the hearts of the poor. A man ten days ago flung his boot at me from the dock after I had sentenced him to a week of imprisonment for breaking Farmer Burdon's hedges and stealing roots of fern and primrose. I caught the boot rather neatly and quite disarmed the rascal. He was the first to applaud the catch; and yesterday he came to me for work!

"Your uncle is in London. He is in great trouble over Welsh Disestablishment, and the Navy, and Germany. He is walking in public processions to protest against the Government's actions. Patrick Spedding is in Ireland fishing, and Nina is at home. She is a sensitive woman and a thinker. She feels that in the storm and stress of modern life religion becomes more and more the one sole thing to trust to and cling to. And I am by no means sure that she is not right. But there is a strong drift away

from the old simple faith of our fathers. One sees it everywhere — education again. Nine parish schoolmasters out of ten are agnostics; but they dare not say so — yet. They wait impatiently for the passing of an Education Bill that will free them from the need of prevarication. No doubt when State and Church part company, which is only a question of time, the real value and strength of the latter will appear. At present the Church cringes in a way I much deplore. As you know, I am strongly against Disendowment; but I have reluctantly begun to suspect that Disestablishment will advance human progress not a little and really help the Church to stand alone. There is a great lack of dignity in its relations with the State at present. There is a lot of humbug about the whole thing, and responsible, agnostic statesmen (the only statesmen who count in the least are agnostics at heart unfortunately) must secretly despise the attitude of the leaders of the Church in their make-the-best-of-both-worlds policy. We sportsmen believe that one cannot run with the hare and hunt with the hounds; but it is the business of diplomatists to do so; and I suppose the Church congratulates itself on the skill with which it is managing this difficult feat. There is, however, a fearful spiritual danger, and we are losing our adherents in the country as well as the town.

"Lady Dangerfield is back from Torquay. Her portrait was mentioned in *The Times* and in *The Athenæum* as a work of great merit. She pretends not to care a rap, but is secretly very gratified, I think.

"Mr. Wicks, the dentist, has returned to Exeter,

and Lady Dangerfield has set the fashion and is his patient again. Do not visit Mrs. Forbes, please, Loveday. I don't want to be un-Christian or unreasonable; and if you desire to argue about it, we can do so on your return home. For the moment, since you do not refuse a measure of obedience to your Ralegh, let it be enough that I ask you not to visit her.

"I am hoping that it will not be very long now before we hear of a date for your return.

"Give my kind regards to your friends, the Misses Neill-Savage, and —

"Believe me, dearest Loveday,

"Affectionately and always yours,

"RALEGH VANE."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE VELVET FISH

BERTRAM DANGERFIELD was very thorough with his pupil. He took her all the way to a royal villa at Poggio that she might see one figure of Andrea's in a fresco. There, too, he showed her works of Pontormo, and revealed certain mannerisms of drawing in the rotundity of the human calf that impressed themselves on her memory for ever.

Once, to give her joy, he took her to a famous garden of many acres, many statues, many marble fountains. The place was formal, severe, and beautiful. Rows of orange and lemon trees in gigantic earthen pots flanked the pathways, to flash their fruit and spread their fragrance together. There were bronzes and dainty Loves by Bologna at the fountains; and other water there was — green as summer Arno — wherein white water-lilies blossomed, and a mighty fish, that looked as if he was made of black velvet, sailed solemnly about with a little, admiring train of golden carp swimming after him. The great gardens were starred with statues and alive with roses and brilliant flowers. It was Loveday's hour, for she knew the name of everything, and Bertram knew the name of nothing.

"For once," she said, "I'm teaching you a little, though 'tis only the dull, Latin names of lovely things."

"When I was a youngster I worried my nurse to tell me God's own name for the flowers. I never could believe she didn't know. The cypress and the rose are all the names I can tell. What is this on the wall, making a feathery silver pattern, and growing on nothing but bricks and mortar apparently? Ah! You don't know."

"Capparis," she said, proudly. "Ask the gardeners if you think I'm inventing."

They played like a brace of children, and the painter declared himself to be Adam giving new names to the growing things.

"Henceforth," he said, "your *vittadenia* shall be called 'Lovedaisies,' and belong to you."

"What a mean little flower to give to me," she grumbled. "Still, the mighty Linnæus took a tinier for his own."

Then they found a white rose with a green beetle, like a live emerald, eating its heart out, and Bertram declared that a sonnet must be made on this fine theme.

"I know you've written a score of verses since you came here," he said. "No woman with your education and your eyes ever lived to be your age without making poetry. And I'm twenty-seven on the third of next June, so nothing more need be added. I love birthday presents."

"The Neill-Savages begin to talk of going," she murmured; but he would not hear of it.

"Don't be ridiculous. You're here to learn Italian and get a nodding acquaintance with the pictures. You're a sun-loving lizard of a girl, and never too hot, so there's no excuse for your going for ages."

"What about Ralegh?"

"Your happiness is his. And he knows you are in good hands."

She considered.

"He was cross in his last letter because I went to dine with Una Forbes and took you."

"Sorry."

"You never told me what you thought of her?"

"One naturally thought more of Forbes. The future is exceedingly dark for him, in my opinion. He'll really have to practise all the virtues that she gives him credit for, and a few others. How would it be if we sent him the Life and Opinions of that excellent man, Marcus Antoninus? They might sustain him."

"I shall go and see Mrs. Faustina Forbes, all the same," said Loveday. "Ralegh doesn't know what a difference Italy makes."

He laughed.

"They are not going home for a year at least, she told me."

"How did you like her?" asked she.

"An elderly Bacchante isn't wildly exciting; but she was very interesting. Under that torrent of ingenuous chatter — it isn't ingenuous really — it's art of a sort — she is wide awake — hunting."

"Hunting, Bertram?"

"Rather. A keen, swift huntress. She's always had men in her larder, that woman, though probably her husband was not aware of it, till she let herself go and brought the dentist out here."

"Men in her larder!"

"Yes — in all stages, some a little high, gamey,

going off — though they don't know it, of course. And some in perfect condition for immediate consumption; and some coming on quietly, the better for hanging a little longer."

"And are you going to be one of them?"

"I! I don't hang in any woman's larder; they hang in mine."

"Do they?"

"Good Lord, no; not really! I only said it to see how you'd look."

"I expect she's had enough adventures now, and is going to be good," said Loveday.

He smiled, and misquoted Villon:

"'For she that loved but once erewhen,
Soon tires of him to her that fell,
And sets herself to love all men.
What moves her thus? I do opine,
Without her honour gainsaying,
That 'tis her nature feminine,
Which tends to cherish everything.'

That's it, eh, Loveday? Good, or bad, or neither, she's going to be herself — as everybody is, having just the same amount of free will as you and I, which is exactly none."

"Free will has not gone, I tell you."

"No, it hasn't gone — because it never came. It's only a name for something that never existed — like the hippogriffs of your future coat-of-arms. Nature controls the machine that she has made in every particular. The machine is not responsible. A piano can't play in tune if it is out of tune. It can't play out of tune if it is in tune."

"But a clock may get out of order," she argued, and he admitted it.

"Agreed. And everybody who had free will would be out of order in exactly the same way — just as much out of order as a man who breaks the rules of the House of Commons. While we play the game of life, we've got to keep the rules, and free will isn't one of them."

"I believe in it, all the same," she said. "I'm doing what I like in a most magical way here. Freedom isn't the word for it. My body's free and my mind's free and my soul's free, and I think about people and face actions and consider things in general in a way I should simply have died to do a few months ago. No doubt I have you to thank for it."

"Not me — Italy. I'm not making you see things differently. It's the adventure of your soul in a new country. Nothing whatever to do with free will. You were ripe grain waiting for the sun of Italy to make you sprout. All the possibilities were lying there — dormant. And don't think you'll ever be what you were before you came here, because you never will."

"I never want to be. What was the good of coming if I was just going to shrink back into my old self again."

"But Sir Ralegh?"

"He'll rejoice to find how much larger minded I am, and cosmopolitan and tolerant, and so on."

"You say so; but your voice shakes — just a little tremble before the high note. It always does when you are telling a fib. I've often noticed it. It's rather interesting, because most people's eyes give

them away when they're lying; but your voice betrays you. No, you know very well he didn't let you come out here to change. And if he knew how you had changed, and how this place has just been the touchstone to your real nature, then he'd —"

"Be quiet!" she said, "and mind your own business. You're horrid sometimes, and very ungentlemanly, too, though you think that's a thing you can't be. You're in a particularly nasty mood to-day. And there *is* free will; and you've no earthly right to criticise Hastings Forbes, or me, or Ralegh."

"All true," he admitted, "except free will. I'll grant the rest. Once a bounder, always a bounder. You'll never reform me. If there were free will, you might; but, as things are, it can't be done."

CHAPTER XXV

"SUNDAY AT HOME"

ITALY leaves no spirit unchanged, for its attack is many-sided. Loveday Merton found herself mightily moved by the South, and, looking backward, it seemed as though she had never lived till now. It is impossible to exaggerate the effect of the experience on her healthy and receptive intellect. With open hands and heart she had come to Italy, to find it exceed all dreams. She said "yea" to it daily, acknowledged its compelling might, discovered that here was her abiding-place, the goal of her journey and crown of all her vague aspirations and longings. Nor did she deny Dangerfield his meed in the transformation. She told herself he was like an Italian wine, that must be drunk in its own country. This was his country. In England he might be difficult, and prove too unconventional for the northern atmosphere; but here he chimed harmoniously with his environment and was a part of it.

Italy had served immensely to widen her outlook and clear her mind; but Bertram was the incarnation of the new experience, and now she set herself to measure how much was his work and how much she owed to Florence. That everything she had learned was to the good, and that nothing but benefit had

accrued from her great expedition, she did not for an instant question. But when it came to holding the scales between Italy and the painter, she found herself powerless. She could not separate the two forces nor apportion to each its significance in her education. In truth, the man was the more responsible, and a time approached when Loveday would realise that fact; a time was near when Italy's siren voice would sound faint and thin without his presence to echo it; when the hot sunshine would lack something of its geniality if he were not there to share it. But for the moment she supposed that the accident of his company only added to the inevitable joy that Italy had brought. They worked on together, and no ray of love lit the workshop. He, indeed, had his own axe to grind, as soon she learned; but for her was only the glad reception and grateful recognition of all he strove to teach her. She did not love him; she did not want him except in her head. Thus she assured herself, yet was not perhaps absolutely frank with herself. Indeed, the need for frankness had not yet arisen, and the natural instinct of every woman is not to be frank with herself, if the necessity can be avoided. Inarticulateness is a common condition of the human mind, and as many lack the spoken words to shade their meaning to others, so most lack the thought word to shade their meaning to themselves. For that is a much more subtle matter, and many, though they are honestly anxious to understand their own motives, cannot unravel such complexities. A man's conduct often puzzles himself quite as much as it puzzles other people; and though Loveday was not puzzled when she thought of

Dangerfield, puzzled she was when she considered her betrothed and herself.

Bertram on his part felt no love for Loveday, but an increasing interest. He was not working for nothing; but he only served one mistress at present, and for her did he labour patiently. He had a secret ambition with respect to his pupil, and trusted that victory might reward his labours; but he kept an open mind, and hoped very little indeed. Yet her character might not easily be read, though there was an element of such good nature in it, and Italy had wrought so gigantically with northern prejudices and instincts that he could not choose but grow slightly more sanguine when she was happy and especially delightful. Moreover, she had ever been a grateful girl, and seemed unlikely to forget her obligations.

They went to the house of two ladies who drew round them much of the English interest of Florence. Mrs. Mackinder and her daughter entertained all who cared to come on Sunday evenings, and Bertram took Loveday to a gathering here, that she might be amused. The Mackinders were writing a book, to be called *The Budding of the Lily,* and their friends agreed that no such work in Florence could or would ever be published again. They were a plaintive, appealing, and affectionate pair — very wealthy and very amiable. Everybody who was anybody in Florence had promised to help them with their monumental work; and all would be thanked, blessed, and rendered immortal in the preface.

A considerable company was already assembled in the great " withdrawing-room " of the Mackinders.

They always called it that. A sub-acid voice greeted the painter as he appeared:

"Ah! here's Bertram Dangerfield, who's going to set the Thames on fire!"

He answered instantly:

"And here's Noel Browning Hartley — who isn't!"

Mr. Hartley was a fair youth with long flaxen hair, a pince-nez, and watery grey eyes behind it. There was something dimly suggestive of vanished time about him — the period of Victorian æstheticism.

"He belongs ridiculously to Du Maurier and *Punch*," whispered Bertram to Loveday. "He probably knows more about Dante than most people; but not as much as many. His Italian must make angels weep. He tries to be mediæval in his speech, and revive obsolete words. He says that, while he uses them, no word is obsolete. He knows d'Annunzio, and never wants to kick him."

She was introduced to several people, and found that all had some claim to distinction. Some painted; some criticised; some represented journalism; the least had written brochures, or contributed a mite to the culture of the coterie. A man was talking about music, in a voice that sounded as though he were not accustomed to be interrupted. But Bertram interrupted him, and introduced Loveday. The man was heavily bearded; by which kindly act of Nature his mouth had been concealed. Thus the observer was constrained to fasten on his fine forehead and intellectual eyes.

He sat with several women round him, and among them was Mrs. Hastings Forbes. Una had won the

Mackinders a little crudely, by subscribing for ten copies of *The Budding of the Lily* when it should appear. And here she was. They had asked her, but they lacked the courage to support her now that she had come. That, however, troubled her not at all. There were plenty of men present; and where there were men Una knew that she was safe, and could be happy and give happiness.

"Mr. Felix Fordyce — Miss Merton," said Bertram. "Don't stop, Fordyce. I only wanted to introduce my friend into the charmed circle. She loves music."

The speaker bowed, and, perceiving Loveday to be very fair, spoke graciously:

"People are so kind as to listen to me — Heaven knows why. We were talking — what was it? Of tone art. It has been said, you know, that poetry and music are twins — Siamese twins, not to be separated without danger to them both. Herder tells us that among the Greeks, poetry and music were one splendour of human mind. Let us consider that. The Greeks, of course, wove poetry and music into their religion. They approached their gods with them, even as we sing to our God still. One can understand the gods of Greece liking music. Doubtless it had power to charm their savage hearts. That, however, is a parenthesis. Well, then, poetry and music are the father and mother of all the arts; and greater than any of their children. Is that agreed?"

An earnest lady, who on insufficient data thought Mr. Fordyce the first genius of Florence, voiced the rest, and said they were all of one mind so far.

"I turn sometimes from pictures to music," said

Loveday, "and then the music sends me back hungry to the pictures."

Mr. Fordyce approved this sentiment, yet indicated subtly that he must not be interrupted again.

"All art should drive us to music, just as all art should drive a man, or woman, to his, or her, lover," he declared, looking at Mrs. Forbes. "Love is the dessert at the banquet of art; but again we wander from our topic. The Latins, as I may remind you, lost the significance of song altogether. They descended to the lilt of the pipe and neglected the strings, with dreadful results, until they had the irrational absurdity to make odes, or songs, which were not written to be sung."

"What nonsense!" ventured Una, whose eyes were fixed on the speaker.

"Worse than nonsense, dear lady. They set a fashion — a dismal fashion that still survives. Our poets followed their ridiculous example."

Dangerfield spoke.

"You got that out of Signor Naldini last Sunday," he said; and Mr. Fordyce laughed and shook his head.

"Run away, and don't interrupt your betters," he replied.

"All right. Now your only hope is to explain that you were first and Naldini got it out of you."

"A delightful man — even a genius," declared Mr. Fordyce, when the painter was beyond earshot. "But music — music. Let us generalise. I shall probably astonish you when I say that Europe speaks not the only word on the subject. Do you know what I mean by Asiatic music? Probably the tom-tom starts to your recollection; but we must go far

behind the tom-tom. Asiatic music was the most amazing tissue of Oriental subtlety that it is possible to conceive. The deep mind of the East penetrated the arcanum of music — be sure of that; and what was the result? Asiatic music deliberately committed suicide, using for its weapon an impossible technique. Years ago — when you were all cutting your teeth on corals — I heard a Javanese orchestra in London. Probably not a dozen Europeans in London understood what they were doing. The Asiatic ear is a thousand times more delicate and refined than ours, and the music that I then listened to had oozed out into a subtlety so tenuous that, like a fountain in the sand, it lost itself. The Indian master distinguished, or affected to distinguish, nine hundred and sixty keys! If he had heard Wagner or Strauss, that Indian master would have died, like a butterfly in a lethal chamber. One agonised quiver of his exquisite sensorium, and all would have been over with him. The Greek, however — always rational and reasonable — must have found his account in quite another sort of music. Doubtless his instruments were sonorous, his cadences exceedingly simple. It is safe to assert that the music of his tragedy was profoundly fitted to the theme and the occasion: an accompaniment to the voice, but with the voice the prime consideration. To kill the voice with any other noise, as Wagner does, would have appeared to your Greek the very height of ignorant folly. And so it appears to me. We shall return to this noble simplicity some day."

"I love orchestral music better than vocal," said Loveday. "Why am I so barbarous?"

"You open a difficult subject: the whole justification of orchestral music. You might ask whether this is not music strayed away from its proper twin, poetry, and therefore in danger of destruction. But I say that such music *is* poetry — poetry itself — just as the singing bird is poetry; or the purring tigress suckling her cubs is poetry; or the girl, who just hums melodiously without words, at her work of weaving Tuscan straw before a cottage portal, is poetry. So that you should love orchestral music best is not a barbarity, young lady. Poetry is no mere matter of words on a page — I'm sure Dangerfield has told you that. For he understands poetry, though he has not found his own soul yet. No, a symphony of Beethoven is as pure poetry as Shelley's 'Sensitive Plant.' Nay, it is purer, in a sense, since melody is a more spiritual medium than thought."

Mr. Fordyce exhibited fatigue, and Mrs. Forbes, trusting her sure genius in such matters, poured out a glass of iced asti-cup from a table not far distant, and brought it to him with a Hebe-like gesture. The other ladies hoped that the speaker would decline the cup; but he did not. He drank with gratitude, and flashed his eyes for Mrs. Forbes alone.

Elsewhere a man in spectacles was talking to Dangerfield, while others listened. The principal speaker here sat on a sofa with Miss Mackinder by his side. They were betrothed, and he was painting pictures for *The Budding of the Lily*.

Herr Paul Schmidt was a German — learned and large-minded, but he lacked humour. He spoke perfect English, in a monotonous voice.

"The Egyptian against the Greek is the battle of

two mighty principles," he said. "It is abstraction against idealisation."

"Question, question," cried Noel Hartley and the speaker answered:

"You shall question when I have spoken — if a question still remains to put. The Egyptian, taking what he considers vital, pre-eminent, and paramount, leaves all else severely alone; the Greek glorifies and shows man, not as he is, but as he might be logically, if physical perfection were possible. He anticipates the results of eugenics and unveils superman — in marble. That way is life, because all is movement, striving, searching; the Egyptian abstraction is death, because there is no movement, no strife, and no quest. The inspiration of one generation becomes the adamant canon for all succeeding generations. A thing very fine is invented, but it is comparatively easy in its convention, and none ever attempts to better it. One may almost say that some obscure condition of Egyptian life suspended the principle of evolution in Egyptian art. There is no such phenomenon to be found in the history of any other nation."

"Crocodile art has to take a back seat, then — that's all I'm concerned about," said Bertram.

"Don't approach such a grave subject in a flippant spirit," answered the German. "We must be tolerant and remember that 'great art is always at its goal.' There is, at the same time, no finality. It is idle to argue that the Greek is greater than the Egyptian, or the Egyptian greater than the Greek. We range up and down among the classic, the romantic, the realistic and the thousand lawful marriages and unions between the spirits conveyed by

these terms. No masterpiece excludes another, or contradicts another."

"It's a question between the seed of life and sterility," declared Bertram. "There's only one point that I can see where the Egyptian beats the Greek, and that is in his animals. I grant a Sekhet, or Sphinx is finer than — say, a Greek horse — even the glorious head of the sinking horse of Selene on the Parthenon pediment. But there's a reason for that. The Sekhet stands for more than a tigress. It is incarnate deity, and hides a goddess. The Greek horse is a horse, and no more. If the Greeks had held that the beasts hid gods, they would have put all the mystery of Egypt into them; but their gods were conceived in human shape; therefore, the human figure was exalted above all else."

"They took the old animal gods — the hawk and snake and wolf — and reduced them from deities to attendants on deities."

A woman spoke. It was Mrs. Mackinder. She rarely began any sentence without two words. Behind her back she was called "Ruskin says." Now she entered the argument.

"Ruskin says that all art, with its method of treatment lowered to a standard within the reach of any mediocre craftsman, must be in a bad state. At least, something like that. Perhaps, Paul, Egyptian art is not Ruler Art, after all?"

She addressed her future son-in-law, and he replied:

"It is without doubt Ruler Art of great majesty and might, but it is a static thing. It sticks fast. It lacks reason. It is knit up with religious super-

stition, and where religion conquers, art faints. The Egyptians shut the door against reason, and their art paid the penalty."

"Just what I argue," added Bertram. "The thing sets no seed. Like the intellectual masters of all time, it left no school, handed down no traditions, was complete in itself. It's the sensual masters who keep the fires burning."

"The sensual propagates, not the intellectual — I grant that."

"Rather — the spiritual swells leave no schools — only the sensual swells. Your Titians hand on the light for those to come; your Michelangelos and Rembrandts complete themselves. Meier-Graefe says it of Rembrandt; I say it of Turner. But Meier-Graefe is blind as a bat where Turner's concerned. One only forgives him after hearing what he says about Hogarth and Constable."

Elsewhere Una Forbes listened to Mr. Fordyce. He sipped asti-cup, smoked a cigarette, and talked of love.

"An artist, as a rule, can't do with one woman, any more than the sky can do with one star," he said.

"Genius ought to be treated delicately in this matter," she admitted. "No doubt history supports you. But — I don't know — women are taking such a strong line nowadays. Women are going to teach the men that if they can't do with one each, they'll very soon have to go without any at all."

"Not women — *women* are not going to teach them that. The neuters may try — those poor, unhappy, busy ones who want to do every sort of work in the

world but their own — they who think the vote is better worth having than the helm. But men do not seek them nor desire them; they fly them. For my part, I would say to such fellow-creatures, 'Take my vote; I will give it to you gladly, on the understanding that you keep out of my sight forevermore and intrude neither yourselves nor your opinions upon me.' Where man is strong enough, he will always win women. The true man is the complement of the true woman; but no man desires to complement these working bees. Their hum is sad as the east wind, and the honey they yield is bitter. They are ill — their state is psychopathic. You, too, are a musician, I see."

"How do you know that?" she asked.

"By your hands."

She shook her head.

"I worship it — it is my food — my spiritual food; but I never could dimly reach my own ideals. Therefore I gave it up. It was one of my greatest griefs that the gift of execution was denied to me."

She had not opened a piano since she left school, knew nothing of, and cared nothing for, music.

He suspected this, but pretended to believe her.

"It would give me profound pleasure to play to you some day," he said. "Like many other women of delicate and fiery sensibility, I doubt not you took your art too sternly and were too hard to satisfy."

Loveday, wandering here and there, found herself suddenly addressed by a strange man. He was clean-shaved, tight-lipped, and very tall. He had searching grey eyes and a humorous mouth. His voice proclaimed him an American.

"And have *you* done anything supreme?" he asked, with a grave face, looking down at her from his six feet four inches.

"No," she said. "I've done nothing at all. I'm not worthy to be here."

"Thank God! Then we can talk as equals," he answered. "I've done nothing at all, either. But are you sure? Perhaps you are saying this out of pity."

He chatted and amused her.

"There's a very delightful man here to-night. But I shan't point him out, because it wouldn't be fair. He's a fellow-countryman of yours, and he came to Florence under a *nom de plume*. D'you know why? Because he's written a book of verses, and fears that he'll be bored to death, and run after, and allowed no peace if people get to know it! 'I'm here for culture, and don't want them to make a lion of me!' Those were his very words."

"Vain wretch! What did you say?"

"'My dear fellow,' I said, 'they won't even make a lapdog of you. For some extraordinary reason, your fame hasn't got to this benighted city. Nobody's ever heard of your poems.' He didn't believe me, of course — he doesn't yet."

"I shall find him out," declared Loveday. "Such an insufferable man must bear the marks."

At midnight Dangerfield saw her back to the "Athena," and she thanked him for the entertainment.

"Mr. Fordyce said you were quite a genius; but he told us that you had not found your soul yet," she said.

"He's right in the second assertion — a nasty, sticky man. How is it that at twenty-six one has so little patience with fifty? I think twenty-six is a clean age, and fifty is a sticky one. He's an egotist and a love-hunter and a beast. But he can play the piano — I grant that."

"He hated you for saying he wasn't original. I saw his eyes flash, though he praised you after you went away. You oughtn't to hurt people. What's the good? They don't hurt you. I wish you were more — what shall I say? — more lovable."

"I wish you were less," he answered, with one of his rare compliments. "As for me, I'm just going to be twenty-seven years old, and that isn't a lovable age. It doesn't know enough. It's too cocksure — too much like me, in fact. But remember this: you can always shut me up and make me as humble as Mrs. Mackinder if you please."

"How?"

"Ah! wouldn't you like to know! But you needn't ask me to tell you."

"I'll find out."

"I daresay you will — then you'll be sorry you have."

CHAPTER XXVI

IN THE CASCINE

LOVEDAY, waking early after sleeping ill, went out before sunrise and felt a pleasant shiver at the cool air. She did not know that it could be so cold here at any hour of the twenty-four. It had been borne in upon her of late how much of Dangerfield's time she occupied, and the reflection began to alarm her. He was a mighty worker, and put work before her, or anything else; but though she had not cut into his hours of work, she had entirely absorbed his leisure, and began to feel guilty about it. For him she could do nothing at all; but he had done so very much for her; and she was powerless to prevent it, because he laughed down any objections and said that it was unlike her, and contrary to her character, meanly to weigh her profit against his loss in their intercourse.

"Plenty of time to balance the books before you go," he said.

She walked in the western darkness of the Cascine beside Arno, and watched the cool green of the river take on a flash and twinkle of melon-red as the sun came to it. Then the world glowed like a fire opal along the shallows and stickles of the stream, and on its silent reaches the reflection of the houses, the grass, the lines of poplars all flashed warm and bright

against the milky hazes of the mountains beyond. Beside Arno the great reed grew, and its glaucous green was sparkling now with beads of pure light where dewdrops ran. Here all still stood in a shadow that thrust half across the river, and made a foreground of cool purple for the glory of the morning beyond. Men were fishing with rods and nets along the further bank, and a boat or two floated under it. But the world was still quiet. In the Cascine nightingales sang together, and the glades as yet resisted the sunshine that would presently pierce them. The great gravel beaches of the river added their light and glowed very brilliantly against the green; and other fine phenomena she marked, as where the poplars quivered away in one long-drawn, receding line. A tree had flowered here and there, and its cotton flashed silvery-rose. Then to the end of the Cascine she tramped with swift and vigorous strides; to find, perched on a seat near the meeting of Arno and Mugnone, Bertram Dangerfield making a sketch in oils.

She joyed to see him, and was glad that he should know she could be early too.

"How lovely!" she cried. "Now I've got all the credit of my virtue, and you'll know that it isn't a mere empty boast that I rise before breakfast sometimes!"

"Half a minute," he answered. "I'm trying to do that grand colour you get twenty minutes after the sun's over the mountains. There are some houses along there that simply made me go mad when the light touched them two mornings ago, so I was out in time to-day for the magic moment."

"Did it come?"

"That's as much as to say it didn't," he answered. "If, after looking at my hour's work, you can ask that, then it shows only too clearly that it did not come — for me. Otherwise you would purr, instead of crushing me with such a question."

"It's lovely, but not lovely enough to make you go mad, in my opinion," she declared.

"As a matter of fact," he confessed, "the light didn't come, or else my eyes were muddy this morning. Anyway, I didn't see it. But what have you seen? Are you bicycling?"

"No, walking."

"So am I. Why we wanted to hire those bicycles, I don't really know. We never use them."

They trudged back to Florence side by side, and she told him what she had seen, and he corrected one or two poetical exaggerations. It appeared that he had observed everything, and observed it better than she.

"You make me so cross sometimes," Loveday said. "But I'll be even with you yet? I've felt a great deal lately that I don't do my share — in our friendship, I mean. You're so useful and kind, and I — I take all and give nothing. So I've been to the library and hired some learned books, just to get up to your standard and interest you. And I've read several fearfully philosophical things; but it's no good showing off to you, because I didn't understand them."

"Hurrah! What an escape! The truth is, you've tried to get off my modest plane and soar — to dazzle me. And instead of doing that, you've only

muddled yourself. And serve you right. Why d'you want to leave me behind?"

"What's pragmatism?"

"Perhaps Shelley, when he walked here, asked himself the same question. Perhaps he asked the nightingales. But — no, he wouldn't have wasted his time, or theirs."

"What is it? D'you know? Don't say you do if you don't, because I'm serious."

"Well you may be. It's a weird hour and place for such a thing. Still, the recording angel isn't awake yet, so it doesn't matter. The germ of pragmatism is in Hegel, and I rather went for it — years ago — because it seemed to me that the thinkers might, after all, justify their existence — in that funny little twilight they move in — if they could link up the unreal world of metaphysics with the real world of humanism. But it's humbug. The pragmatists are only Christians in disguise, though they would be very angry if you told them so. Of course, they want to dethrone reason, and I like them for this: that they admit truth isn't everything. But it's a cowardly sort of doctrine of feasibility and comfort and convenience. Who the deuce wants to be feasible and comfortable and convenient if he's got any pluck in him? No, a metaphysician *can't* be practical; and you can't be human if you derive from Hegel. Nobody will argue that he was human."

"It's no good bothering about it, then?" asked Loveday.

"Not unless you find it warming to your spirit."

"I don't."

"Did Sir Ralegh?"

"He didn't."

"I swatted at it fearfully in my green youth and took it all up again, when Bergson first at Heaven's command arose from out the professorial rough and tumble. But I go back to Schopenhauer every time, and the new gods don't dethrone him. I can't find a moral metaphysic outside him — nothing for your brains and impulses and instincts to get fat and jolly upon. The rest are like athletics — all right as tonic, but no use for food."

"Is Schopenhauer food?" she asked.

"Food and drink," he assured her. "We never hear of his beauty, only his strength. But what is his 'Compassion' but beauty — the uttermost beauty? It's worth all the 'Categorical Imperatives' and 'Wills to Power,' and 'intuitions' put together. In fact, it's the most beautiful thing in human nature really. Not to see all men in ourselves, but ourselves in all men — that's Schopenhauer's 'Compassion' — great enough to make ten men immortal, let alone one. And that's what Nietzsche tried to kill — and couldn't."

"Schopenhauer must be read by me," declared Loveday. "He's evidently beautiful."

"And wonderful and terrible sometimes — like a day of thunder-clouds and threatenings, with the sunshine breaking through and warming you, just when you're getting cold and frightened. He ought to win the artists, for he admits that the emotion excited by art is among the precious things in a sad world. 'In art power alone matters,' he said, and Aristotle said the same. Schopenhauer's 'Compas-

sion' seems to run pretty close to the Greek Aidôs — a sort of conscience waking to ruth or shame that the world should be as unhappy as it is. And, more than that, a feeling that the helpless are sanctified, that they make claim to the most sacred places of the human heart. The very old and very young appeal to Aidôs. It is a spirit that can turn no deaf ear to the widow and orphan."

"And belongs to far-off Greek things?" she asked him.

"I believe Schopenhauer found it there, or else rediscovered it in his own great soul. Who can say Aidôs lacks spirituality when we see the objects of it? The disinherited of earth, the helpless, the injured, the very dead. 'Though he is my enemy, I compassionate him,' says Ulysses of Ajax, in Sophocles, 'because he is yoked to grapple with fearful calamity'; and the poor madman himself, in that mighty passage of pathos, is driven to holy sorrow at leaving his wife a widow and his child an orphan amid their foes. At the end, too, when Agamemnon asks whether Ulysses feels Aidôs for the corpse of a foe, the answer comes, 'Yes, for his goodness is more to me than his hate.' Pure rationalism led to that — the rationalism of the early Greeks. But Aidôs took wing afterwards — so says Gilbert Murray. Aidôs belonged to the childhood of the Golden Age, and vanished off the earth before the policeman and public opinion and the scientific bent of mind. Then she came back and found Schopenhauer, because she knew his heart could make a home for her. That's where Nietzsche is a mere barbarian beside Schopenhauer. He pits Hubris against Aidôs — the faculty that

scorns tradition, revels in brute strength, exalts power and pride to the throne."

"Go on about compassion," begged Loveday.

"Well, there it is in a word — just fellow-feeling — putting yourself in the other man's place. From it springs every action that is worth a groat — morally speaking. And he proves it brilliantly, of course. Compassion is, in fact, one of the three fundamental springs of human action — only the third in order, I regret to say. He puts the others first and second. No doubt that's why they call him a pessimist."

"What are they?" asked she.

"Number One is Number One — egoism. That's the lever that moves the world of each of us; and Number Two is Malice — the willing of woe to your fellow man. I hope Schopenhauer is wrong there."

"Does he despise the English, like Nietzsche?"

"He thinks of us very justly, as the most honourable and most hypocritical race on earth. That sounds a rum mixture, but it's true, because our ideal is justice and our bugbear is morals."

Loveday nodded.

"Stop here and finish off metaphysics quick," she said. "I'm getting hungry and tired, both."

They sat a moment under the great white-boled poplars of the Cascine.

"Metaphysics is seeking to know things as they are, despite the prime physical certainty that you never can, because no two know alike. The beautiful ideas in the swagger metaphysicians are not metaphysics. Take your Bergson again. I wade through anything of his — for the poetry. I remember a

case. He is talking somewhere about indetermination into matter, or some such fearful wild-fowl, and then he cries out suddenly, like that hidden nightingale there, that love — maternal love, may hold the real secret of life! The mother's love shows us each generation leaning and yearning over the generation that is to follow! That's poetry; but when poor science struggles to do the same, and leans over the next generation with pure love in her spectacled eyes and enthusiasm in her steely bosom, and we see 'Eugenics' born, the artists and socialists and 'intellectuals' to a man don't see the poetry, and merely make faces, and say that the unborn must happen by chance forever, because Dick, Tom, and Harry, and a few other celebrities, happened by chance. We may breed sweet-peas and ladies' lap-dogs, but it's farmyard philosophy to bother about ladies' babies. However, science is well used to seeing silly people put their tongues out at her. It's easy to be patient if you know you're going to win."

"Science must win, I suppose?" asked Loveday.

"Science must win," he declared. "Physics, the strong, has always been merciful to metaphysics, the weak. To talk about a metaphysical need is bosh. The things that have made the history of the world are all outside metaphysics, and morals too. They hamper action, as you may see in certain, living men of action, who would have been ten times the men they were, but for their love of dialectics."

"I want my roll and coffee," said Loveday.

"I *know* you eat two at least," he answered — "perhaps three, and then, in your secret heart, wonder how you will survive till luncheon. Anyway, I

always eat three, and am full of greediness and hunger an hour afterwards. That's one of the joys of being young — the joy of hunger. We can stuff gloriously, and eat ices and drink anything, and never think about next morning."

"Or take mosquitoes," she said. "It's a sign that people are getting on when they worry about mosquitoes. I hear Stella wandering about her room at night with Ruskin's 'Mornings in Florence,' and then there's a crash and a sigh, and I know she's missed. But, as for me, the mosquitoes may have my bluest vein to suck. Nothing can wake me when I'm once asleep."

"These great gifts make us insolent to the old," he declared. "Only the old are poor — the unhappy things who take about little bottles for little troubles, and little pillows for little pains — the sad folk who look at a menu, as people look at a hand in a game — to consider what they had better discard. By the old — speaking generally — one means everybody over forty-five. Do *we* read menus? No, or if we do, it's for greediness, not discretion. We don't need discretion. We go dashing gloriously on — tasting everything in life. Nothing shocks us, nothing gives us mental or physical indigestion. We try all things."

"And ought to cleave to that which is good," quoted Loveday.

"And don't we? I know I do. Not a man in Florence works harder than I, and work can be a very distinguished business, or a very mean business, according to the mind behind it. You can make a statue basely, or a footstool nobly."

She laughed.

"'Ruskin says'—"

"Words like it, no doubt. The thought is obvious. But he's often dreadfully right, though you may chaff him. He tells you, for instance, that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless. So now it's my turn to laugh."

"Why?"

"Because — look at yourself! Is there a lovelier, uselesser thing in all Firenze, or Italy, than you?"

"To be beautiful is to be a thousand times more than useful," said Loveday in her pride. "Anybody can be useful. Those men there with their carts in the river, picking stones out of the water, are useful. You are useful. I'm like the view from Vallombrosa — not in the least useful, but something better."

"So you laugh last," he answered. "And while you are beautiful and I am useful — to you — nothing else matters. But you are going to be useful too — presently — at least, I hope so."

He left her on the doorstep of the "Athena"; then he turned back after having said farewell.

"Remember the Uffizi to-morrow — and Botticelli."

"Remember! D'you think I shall forget?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Things may happen — in fact, they will happen. I warn you of that. A time may come when you will wish you had forgotten."

With these words he left her wondering.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE NEW-BORN VENUS

THEN dawned a day big with the fate of the young man and maiden. They devoted it to Botticelli. In the morning they went to the Pitti and the Accademia; and in the afternoon they stood before the Venus at the Uffizi.

Loveday came innocently to this meeting; but the man had a tremendous ambition presently to be exploded on her ears.

"There's more bosh talked about Botticelli's Venus than any picture in the world," he said. "Pater, for instance, declares that the drawing is as faultless as Ingres'. Well, it isn't, and there's an end of the matter. Look at the weak left arm and shoulder, if nothing else. She's like those other things we saw in stone — just a delicious woman made to be loved and to have the doubt and sadness kissed out of her wonderful, pleading eyes. But she's not Venus — more's the Lorenzo di Credi in the next room — a portrait, too — older, but precious. This girl was a Medici's mistress — or somebody's. She's in a dozen of Botticelli's pictures, and if she was Simonetta really, then her early death was not hidden from the prophetic painter. It's in her eyes."

"She's unutterably lovely to me."

"So she is to me — save for the affectation of the hands. Why on earth did the new-born Venus want to use her hands and her hair for clothes? Why did she seek to cover her bosom more than her face? That betrayed the painter, not the subject. She's neither modest nor impudent — It's the old, stupid pose that spoils scores of statues to me. My Venus —"

"Won't have any soul; and I expect you're too young to see all that other people see in this Venus," said Loveday.

He looked at her and did not argue.

"Perhaps I am. My mind is hard and clean yet. I value the healthy and the sweet and the sane. I hate the morbid, and the soul is always morbid. In fact, like the pearl, it's a morbid secretion. I love Michelangelo's tondo; because it is soulless and Greek and not Christian. The child's hair is full of vine-leaves to me. And it is the Greek in Botticelli that I care about, not the mysticism. A modern generation of critics have found that in him. Half the critics' virtues are faults to a painter."

Then Loveday spoke:

"You are very hard, as you say; but I suppose you'll be different, like everybody else, when time has played its tricks and sorrow has come."

"You're not well," he answered. "This is not the way for young Loveday to talk. Stand by her a moment — the place is empty. There — you've got a good deal of her, as I told you that first great moment we met in London. Take off your hat for one second. I implore it. Yes; but you're grander — your fingers are stronger and rounder; your shoul-

ders are wider. How difficult you'd be! Oh, Loveday, if you could — if you could only sit to me for my Venus, what a gorgeous picture I should make!"

She stared at him, and seemed to grow larger while sudden colour mantled her cheeks.

"I'm not a model," she said.

"Yes, you are — the model of all models — the everlasting, precious, lovely, solemn thing I want — more wonderful than this, because more splendid. Here is beauty without power, or promise of power; you'd be young, new-born, growing under one's very eyes, and stately, too — not sad, nor yet happy — just the serene, all-conquering goddess!"

There was something like pain in her eyes now, and her voice rang unsteadily.

"What will you say next?"

"I'll say you'd have your part — the supreme part — in what might be a grand thing. I'll say you'd justify your existence, if I can make you. Come and see the Venus Genitrice now. There's only the Greek torso left, and that isn't as glorious as another Venus like it — in the Museo Nazionale at Rome; but you can see the very body of Venus there — a thing that might have been shaped on you, a goddess with the warm ichor in her veins under the transparent robe. My Venus will have less light than Botticelli's, but not such a cold light. I think of the fore-glow warming the sea, as I saw it once in the Mediterranean — just great shreds of warm, coppery light floating like flower-petals on the purple. Only the horizon was full of dim fire, and overhead the stars still glimmered. Her shell of pearl is just stranding in the cold, blue foam. She comes

to earth with the aube, and her eyes will be your eyes, and her body your body if you will it."

She panted.

"My God! What do you make of me?" she cried, so loudly that a guardian of the gallery — a rat-faced, withered man — came round the corner.

"It is what I would make of you," he answered calmly. "This is Italy, remember, not Devonshire."

"Never, never mention it again; from the moment you do, I will not see you, or speak to you."

"So be it, Loveday. After this hour it shall not be mentioned. But you must hear me now, and you must utterly change your point of view and take a bath of clean ideas before you leave me. This hope has been the dream of my life since I first saw you in the cast room at the B. M. You must know that I honour and respect you above any woman I have ever seen, just as I admire you above any woman I have ever seen; and in asking you this, I am paying you the mightiest compliment in my power. For God's sake make an effort and be Greek for five minutes. You owe me that, for if you carry away a false opinion from this room, or believe for an instant that I have cast a shadow on you, then I shall be a very unhappy man. It is clearly understood that it can't happen. Your word is law on that point, and the hope of my life is lost."

"I hate to think that you have dared to imagine me so," she said. "I hate it; and I hate you for doing it; and any English girl would hate and loathe a man if she thought he was vile enough to do it."

"Good! Now there's a strong position — the position of the true-born, outraged English girl. But

listen, and I swear you shall hate and loathe me no more. We've agreed to see things from each other's point of view as much as man and woman can. So we'll see this, too. Your view is clear — the innocent, horrified, virginal view. Now, what is it built on? Of what is it the outcome? Why are you outraged? Phryne — the Cnidian Venus of Praxiteles — let the whole world see her ascend from her bath — not for lewdness, but just for love, because she happened to be the most beautiful thing in Greece, and she knew that the sight of her must be a joy to everybody who loved beauty."

"Shame has come into the world since then," said Loveday. "I'm not a Greek hetaira."

"Yes — shame has come into the world, and Christianity has tried to strangle sense for two thousand years and make Art a slave, instead of a queen. But no religion will ever strangle sense. Pure paganism *is* pure — pure at heart and in peace with itself and Nature; Christianity is impure at heart and at war — ceaseless, losing war — with Nature."

"What's that to me?"

"Everything. The Greeks were too wise to fight a losing battle if they could help it. They bowed to nature — fatal or victorious. But Christianity has gone from bad to worse, and the consequences of her losing battle are psychological. They have vitiated clean thinking and clean living; they have brought man to such a pass that not one man in fifty can think cleanly if he tries to, and not one woman in a hundred. Now, let's get this thing on to the proper plane. You'll not accuse pagan me of any base or vile thought, Loveday? You mustn't do that.

Art's my goddess, not you — that goes without saying, doesn't it? You would be infernally difficult, and I should probably curse the gods for hurling such a problem at my head. There would be a terrible struggle for a masterpiece, followed very likely by defeat and life-long disappointment. If I failed, I should hate myself forever."

"And me too."

"Not you. Now for the physical side first. There are worldly thinkers — and everybody's more or less stained with the world by the time they're forty — who would say it wasn't possible for an artist to do this without sense coming into it; and perhaps it wouldn't be for anybody past forty years old. But I'm short of twenty-seven, and I tell you this: that I know myself. Every man is a bundle of twisted impulses — a plaited rope that's pitted against the strain of the world. It depends on the blend whether the rope wears well — a rotten strand or two will fray all. But the very best are like to get ragged and worn if a man lives long enough, and the strands of sense are seldom absent from the artist's rope. In my case the rope's not frayed — there hasn't been time. I don't pretend to say what I may be when I get among the 'roaring forties'; but at present I'm far too ambitious to be immoral or incontinent, and I'm also far too busy and too conceited, if you like. At my age a man of any distinction ought to be working as the giants work. You must be abstemious and use sense like a miser if you want to do big things; because energy is energy, and force is force, and the best endowed have only their daily share to spend and no more."

"You may be sure of yourself. I take that for granted. But you must think of others beside yourself. You must think of a proud woman and a proud man. Just ask yourself one question. What would Ralegh say?"

"Since he won't know, it doesn't matter an atom what he'd say. You might as well ask what Mrs. Grundy would say."

"And what should I *feel* when I saw him again?"

"Good Lord, Loveday! What a reactionary question! Haven't you got any further than that? Well, let me jog on; but stop me if I bore you, or trouble you. It's for your peace as much as for my own self-respect that I'm talking."

"I want you to speak."

"If something would hurt you to see Sir Ralegh again after you'd sat to me for Venus, the question is what? I suppose you'd say it was conscience, and that means we are up against a question of right and wrong. Well, right or wrong simply means harming others, or not harming them. D'you grant that?"

"Yes, in the last resort."

"In the last and in the first. Because, if you even make it personal and say that right or wrong may mean harming yourself, or not harming yourself, still the community is involved. If you harm yourself, or do wrong to yourself, you are weakening yourself and so doing harm to everybody. Who shall decide? A man — your future husband — thinks himself harmed by you because you sit to me? But is he? You know perfectly well that you have not harmed him. Still, the sense of harm lies in his

mind; therefore, it is real to him; while to your mind it is not real at all."

"To my mind it would be very real."

"Wait. I am assuming that on the strength of pure reason you would feel you had done him no harm. If you have, then the harm can be named; but can it? No, there is no name for the harm. However, he would hold himself injured and you know that he would. I wish I could make you see before I go on that his injury is imaginary rather than real. Are you sure honestly you don't see that?"

She hesitated.

"There are some things you feel about, and feeling is higher than thinking," she said. "What's the good of going on in this cold-blooded way?"

"The good is that you shan't leave me either thinking or feeling one evil thought against me," he answered. "Don't miss the thread of the argument. Grant, just for pure reason's sake, that Sir Ralegh's injury is not real. Drop feeling an inherited prejudice and false shame for a moment and confess that, as a mere matter of fact, the man is not really wronged."

"What then?"

"Then an individual's mistaken sense of wrong is coming between a creator and a possible masterpiece," he said calmly. "That's only one man against another, of course, and there's nothing much in it. But suppose I made a great picture — a thing that would mean joy for generations unborn? Is your lover's comfort and content to come between the world and even the possibility of such a thing?

Is my Venus never to be born, for fear that your Ralegh's conventional standards may be threatened?"

"Certainly. His feelings are a thousand times more to me than your ambitions."

"Isn't that rather selfish? Understand that in one way I am glad to escape the great ordeal of painting you, Loveday, for failure would be a fearful tribulation to me; but I must see that my conscience really is clear."

"I've settled once for all."

"I know you have. Then to the academic argument. He's wronged. Tell me how. Or, if that isn't to be; if, as you say, it's a mere nameless feeling in you that he's wronged, then for fairness try to analyse that feeling and explain how it masters you so completely. You cannot do a great service to art, because your lover wouldn't like it. Well, define his injuries. How would he write them himself, if he knew what I'd asked you to do?"

"He'd write them with a horsewhip on your shoulders. He'd want to kill you for even daring to dream of such a horror. And — I'm nothing, nothing like beautiful enough — whatever you think."

"'Beauty is the promise of happiness,'" he quoted. "My picture, painted in your light, would have been happiness, must have been pure happiness — unless I had failed. Luminous with beauty — an everlasting thing if I'd only been master enough. Beauty is a relative term, and you may as well dispute about taste or conduct; but there are some things about which there can be no dispute — like moon-

light on the sea, or the man who gives his life for his friend — or you."

He was infinitely patient and perfectly cool; she was growing more and more agitated, and her self-control threatened to depart.

"Leave it — leave it, for God's sake! It shows how useless our wretched reason is when — when — oh, can't you understand what I'm made of, or is it hidden from your artist mind? I hate art — I shall always loathe art and everything to do with art forever and ever after to-day. I forgive you — I know you're right, from your point of view, and I know I'm right from mine, and — let me get out of this and go home. I'll go back to England at once. I don't feel as I did. But I know it's all for art — nothing but art. I know that."

"If you forgive me and understand that much, nothing else matters," he said. "Come along. I'll see you back. And don't cuss art — only me. And don't go all the way home savage with me. I only did my duty as a serious artist. I'm off myself to-morrow — to Siena for a few days, to paint something I want there. So you'll have peace and quiet. Go and look at things by yourself, and think your own thoughts about them. I've been playing the schoolmaster too much altogether. Regard me as dead and buried — at any rate, till I come back again."

He saw her to the hotel, and, to show her that the subject was dropped forever, spoke of indifferent matters and their common acquaintance. But his eyes roamed restlessly; his mind was suffering bitterly under a mighty disappointment. This had been

the dream of many months. He concealed the fact, however, and strove to restore Loveday's serenity. She proved not easy to calm. Things rather than people seemed to offer peace to her. Her eyes held the Bigallo for a while, and when they came to the Piazza Santa Maria Novella she gazed upon the front of the church, to find peace in its lifted loveliness and stately form. Seeking to distract her, he fastened upon it and spoke about it before he took his leave.

"The glorious thing is always darkened for me by a gloomy thought. The Paterenes, you know. Their heresy — what was it?"

"Do heresies trouble you?" she asked languidly, with her eyes on the church.

"Not as a rule; but the results of this one were so dreadful. They thought the body was merely a prison for the punishment of sins committed before birth; they believed marriage was wicked; that the body of Christ was never on the altar, because it had never existed really save as a spirit, and couldn't therefore be turned into flesh and blood. They were, you see, exceedingly tough and difficult customers; and to deal with them and steady down their vain imaginings, the Inquisition came to Firenze. And it was here — here in this ineffable Santa Maria Novella — that the Dominicans gave the Inquisition a home."

"Where are you going to be at Siena?" she asked.

"Don't know exactly. I shall see if some of my friends are there. But if you wanted anything, you might write to the Grand Hotel Continental. If I'm not there, I can call every day on the chance. Good-bye. If you and 'the Apennine' feel in the least

tempted to come to Siena again, there's my car will be eating its head off, for it will take me there and then come back."

"How long shall you be there?"

"Don't know a bit. Good-bye, again."

CHAPTER XXVIII

LOVEDAY TO RALEGH

"FIRENZE.

"MY DEAREST RALEGH,—

"Ever so many thanks for your long, interesting letter. Only there's one thing: Mr. Dangerfield is not 'an outsider' in any sense, or in any shadow of a sense. He is a very great artist, and if you saw into his mind as I have, you would recall that unpleasant word. He is a dignified, high-minded gentleman, and happens to be an artist, too. It may or may not be rare for an artist to be a gentleman; but he is, to the very core of his being, and he has a most delicate and subtle perception as well, which all gentlemen have not.

"I called on the Princess, as you wished, because she had known your father in Rome; but it was all fearfully absurd: she'd forgotten all about the Vanes, and mixed them up with other people. I bored her fearfully for about a quarter of an hour, and then cleared out. English people here are a community to themselves. They hardly mix at all with the Italians, and not much with the Americans either — at least, not such as I know. The Italians are hidden from us — quite right too. If I was an Italian, I should hate to have English people poking into my home and secretly criticising my ways and all the differences there must be between Latins and

Anglo-Saxons. We are interlopers at best, and don't cut at all a dignified figure, in my opinion. However, I shouldn't mind what they thought if they'd only let me stop. I'd sooner live in Italy than anywhere in the world — but I've told you that already, and I know you hate it. All the same, I shall love to see dear little Devonshire again.

"Now to tell you about some beautiful things. Of course, my taste is not formed, and I often like the wrong things; but if I like a thing, I do, and it's no good trying to choke me off it, as Mr. Dangerfield sometimes does. He, of course, has served a life's apprenticeship to art, and his taste is formed and very severe; but he differs often from great professional critics. No doubt he is ahead of his generation rather, as all really swell artists are. His painting I think is beautiful. He is full of ideas — he is, in fact, a painter of ideas. I think he is in a transition state about religion, though, of course, not a Christian at all. He is a rationalist; and last week he said, 'We must stick to earth, but not forget there are mountains on it.'

"He hates metaphysics, and doesn't pretend to understand them, and doesn't believe in souls. But he keeps an open mind, and is always perfectly respectful to everything but humbug. He hates that as much as you do. I am reading Schopenhauer, and other favourite writers of his. They are, I hope, killing all the stuffy, silly germs that have collected in my mind.

"But I must tell you of the things I love best here — just as they flashed to me — to be part of me forevermore.

"The Campanile of Giotto. It is covered with marble the colour of flower-petals. And in the Duomo that I wrote about, the unfinished Pieta by Michelangelo. It ought to be on his tomb at Santa Croce. A fearfully sad spirit seems to brood over it. And Vasari knew it should be there; but they put up a monument by Vasari himself instead — a thing of no great account.

"Santa Croce is a noble old church, and full of light, which the others are not.

"Then the gates of the Baptistery of Ghiberti. This is a very ancient building, and Bertram told me a most interesting thing about it. When Brunelleschi wanted to learn how to build the glorious dome of the cathedral, he went to Rome to find a way. But he couldn't find a way in Rome. Then he came back to Firenze and discovered the secret at his very door — in the roof of the Baptistery! Evolution is working like that everywhere, all round us in nature and art and life. The foundations of Vanestowe were laid when the first Stone Man built his hut. I'm a confirmed evolutionist, you see!

"Then there is the face of Santa Maria Novella quite close to us here — like wonderful old ivory, rich and rare — battered and beautiful, and patient and enduring. Little yellow flowers climb along raggedly high up on its face. I never know if I love it best when the early morning light comes to it, or at night against a glimmer of stars. Then it is very solemn, and seems to melt away into the darkness and belong to celestial places. You feel there is nothing between it and Heaven.

"Then there is the Bigallo — a dear, desirable

building among the giants — an intimate, understandable, friendly little place that my heart went out to the first moment I saw it. This is my first and dearest love.

"I'll go on with my favourite statues and pictures in the next letter, if you're interested.

"We must, *must,* MUST have some statues at Vanestowe, Sweetheart. After you have once been here and seen Donatello and Michelangelo and the antique, you'll simply hate those rows of stags' heads, and spears, and helmets, and horrors. Vanestowe is the very hall of halls for big, grand things; and as there are about five hundred poor artists engaged always here in copying statues and pictures, they can most easily be got.

"Tell Nina I shall call her 'my hated rival'! I'm so glad she's being so jolly. I do honestly believe in *some* of her manifestations, she would have been more precious to you than I; but not in all. She couldn't worship my darling boy like his Loveday does and always, always will.

"P. S.— As you are so fearfully commanding, of *course* I won't go again to Mrs. Faustina Forbes. But it seems narrow and silly of a great, strong man to bully a poor female thing whose only fault was a weakness for his sex!"

CHAPTER XXIX

DEMETER AND ABBAS

"ALBERGO ATHENA,
"FIRENZE.

"DEAR BERTRAM,—

"To-morrow is your birthday, and I write to wish you very many happy returns of it. You always seem rather old and wise to me, though you can't be really, or you wouldn't have wasted so much time on a very stupid woman. I want you to believe that I am deeply grateful in my way; but one can't always be saying 'Thank you.'

"Of course, work goes on, and I am retracing all the old ground as best I can without you. It is different, though. In fact, I miss you very much indeed. I don't tell you this as a piece of news, for you know it exceedingly well; I merely confirm it.

"We are going to Como presently. There are some friends of Stella's at Cadenaggio, so it is settled that we spend a few weeks there till we are roasted out. Then I go home, and they go to Axenfels.

"I am out of heart about my Italian. I am also out of heart about my poetry. It seems absurd to send you a rhyme after refusing to let you see one line until now. But I promised you a birthday present, and so I must keep my word. I can't give a

selfish creature like you anything you could possibly want, as you never deny yourself anything in the world that money can buy, so I send you a thing that has no value of any sort or kind. It was inspired by your picture of 'Demeter and Abbas.' Tear it up quick as soon as you've read it, and don't think about it any more.

"DEMETER AND ABBAS.

"On a fair day, Demeter, wandering
And wearied, came into a dingle deep,
Where leapt the crystal of a secret spring,
And countless starry blossoms woke from sleep.
The Mother smiled and took great joy to find
A little resting-place so fitted to her mind.

"Straight from the cold, sweet cisterns of the earth
That fountain leapt, the goddess longed to taste;
But first she ministered to the sad dearth
Of a blue hyacinth; then, without haste,
Made tender quest, to see if it were well
With every precious thing that homed upon the dell.

"She stroked the golden saxifrage that hung
Over the fountain; many a primrose bright
Trembled beneath her hand; aloft, among
The lemon catkins, sparks of crimson light
The goddess counted, knowing that in these
Lay hid the harvest sweet of all those hazel trees.

"The dim wood-rush, the dewy moschatel,
The sun-bright king-cup and the orchis sweet,
The least campanula with azure bell,
And the veined violet, kissed her tired feet.
Sure the forget-me-not had never known
That Dame Demeter's eyes were bluer than her own.

"Now sat she down and arched her stately palm
To make a ready cup whence she might drink;
Whereon there swam, without a thought of harm,
A fleet of shining minnows to the brink;
Touched her white hand, and with devout surprise
Stared up, a humble love in all their goggled eyes.

"Alas! that on an hour so gracious, fair
And comely falls a shade; it must be told
How laughter shrill awoke the ambient air,
And echoed rude and rash and over-bold.
A naked, human boy the reeds among
Made faces and poked out his naughty little tongue.

"Demeter, scarcely used to infant slight—
For sweet Persephone and griefs to come
Were hidden still within uncertain light
Of future time—the urchin ordered home.
But little Abbas laughed and disobeyed,
For at her lovely look, what child could be afraid?

"'Then shalt thou be a human boy no more!'
Quoth the great goddess, 'but a plague and pest
To every traveller about this shore;
To all who hither come in thirsty quest
Of these bright waters. Henceforth, prone and mute,
Thou art, rude little rogue, a scarlet-crested newt!'

"With but one cry, poor Abbas down and down
Sank through the silver to the amber sands
Beneath the fountain; changed from pink to brown;
Put forth small paws instead of feet and hands;
Dwindled to inches three, while, like a flame
Along his back and tail, a scarlet crest there came.

"Now, when the way-worn traveller runs to sip,
And bends to touch the sparkling crystal clear,
Young Abbas creeps upon his open lip.
Whereon he leaps with horror or with fear.

But should this hap to you, feel no annoy;
That scarlet-crested newt was once a little boy.

"Good-bye. I hope you are making something beautiful at Siena.

"Sincerely yours,

"LOVEDAY MERTON."

CHAPTER XXX

BERTRAM TO LOVEDAY

"SIENA.

"DEAR LOVEDAY,—

"What a birthday present! It is worth living twenty-seven years to get such a precious poem. You have made something much lovelier than my picture, and if you can do a tiny thing like this so daintily and deftly, I am very sure you could make big things too — great big beautiful things. If I thought that by stopping away I should tempt you to send me some more verses, I would stop away. But I know you won't, so I shall come back to Firenze and beg for some more.

"The thing I was here to do came off, and as there's another thing I want to (for my Prometheus), and it happens to lie quite near Cadenaggio, *might,* if 'the Apennine' permitted it, spend a day or two there with you all, and show you a few visions in the mountains you would otherwise not see. I'm assuming you would like to turn the tables and take me out among the wild flowers and clamber aloft to the last little table-cloths of snow that are still lying spread for wanderers' luncheons on the heights round Como.

"I've met another metaphysician — a disciple of the late Professor William James; and you've met

him, too! It is that distinguished American who was at the Mackinders', and asked you if you'd done anything supreme, and didn't realise that the mere fact of your being alive was a supreme performance on your part. James had his mighty artist brother's subtlety of mind, but lacked Henry's Greek perspicuity and clearness. Yes, he is amazingly direct, though people don't think he is. He leaves no loophole — scorns fog and mist, clears up as he goes on. William sits on the fence, and ultimately slides down on the side of deity — rather as a man goes into a field where he suspects there may be a bad-tempered bull. I've read his essay on a Future Life — cautious, timorous, even cowardly. These metaphysicians won't see that for practical purposes there *can* be no next world, if we are to enter it without any conscious knowledge of the last. They won't concede that, yet without it a future life is merely being born again without one link to bind us to the past. If Bertram Dangerfield is coming to the scratch once more in a new environment, after he is obliterated from this one, and if not one stain or tincture is to remain of this one after Lethe has been drunk, then for every practical and rational purpose there is no next world for Bertram Dangerfield. A flower sets its seed and perishes. The seed may hand on the race of the plant; but the flower that set it is not going to have any resurrection.

"Then my new friend gave me Hobhouse — his *Morals in Evolution* — a grand book full of splendid things — a master's book.

"It's only the summing-up that leaves you cold — so guarded. He says this: —'It is, at any rate, some-

thing to learn — as, if our present conclusion is sound, we do learn — that this slowly wrought-out dominance of mind in things is the central fact in evolution. For, if this be true, it is the germ of a religion and an ethics which are as far removed from materialism as from the optimistic teleology of the metaphysician, or the half naïve creed of the churches.' Hedging — hedging — hedging. I suppose everybody hedges after they are forty. This line of Hobhouse's is merely theism — no more, no less — awfully disappointing after the magnificence of the book.

"But we artists — you and I and the others — we don't hedge. We 'make a spoon or spoil a horn'; and if we're smashed to-day, we're none the less soaring again to-morrow. We sink lower than the rest of the world, and suffer pains beside which those of hell are pleasures; but then we rush up higher — a million times higher than any other sort of spirit, and have our moments compared to which the Seventh Heaven would be merely a Mackinder 'Sunday at Home.'

"Art frees us — art alone is free. It is the sole occupation of man wherein time and space are as nothing — wherein he finds absolute liberty to reach the utmost limits of his unconditioned powers. Only through the gates of art can we join hands with the Greeks and win a little of their pagan frankness and escape the eternal lie. Nature's self has fallen in love with art and given her body and soul to the artist. None else possesses her as he can.

"Hobhouse set me thinking on the great part that evolution plays in art — a part the critics rather

slight, because they generally have no feeling for the science of art. We've always got to remember what went before everything, if we want to understand it and be just. The root is out of sight, but where would the branch be without it, and where the fruit without the bough? Evolution is working everywhere, not only pushing forward, but also struggling helplessly in blind alleys. She's doing a lot in blind alleys of art just now, especially here in Italy. The modern Italian defiles every medium he touches — from marble to poetry. But I suppose the blind alleys have to be explored for their possibilities. I repeat that a sense of evolution makes us just, and teaches us to give every man his due. Copernicus was nought without Regiomontanus, and he in his turn owed as much to Purbach, who taught him all he knew himself. It is just that all through the piece — a question of lenses; but when the microscope shows us a miracle, or the telescope separates a twin star, who remembers to bless the man who ground the glass so well and truly? Do you know Chamberlain's famous book — a world book — only spoilt by one fact — that Roosevelt likes it? It seems so absurd to like anything that Roosevelt likes. But Chamberlain is a mighty genius, and he will help us all to fall in love with the Germans soon — as I did long ago. Chamberlain says that there's no progress beyond Homer and Michelangelo and Bach. You see what he means? In a sense, there is not. But it is what Æschylus did with Homer's gods and goddesses that I'm arguing for. That was evolution.

"Another happy thought: Art's children have

never been absent from the earth since conscious intelligence came to it, and man first descended from the trees and began to stand upright and think. The swells overlap forever; and they did so, no doubt, long before history chronicled their achievements. The world has never been quite starved of great artists even in its lean centuries. The year that Michelangelo died, Shakespeare was born; Calderon closed his eyes as Bach opened his; I was born — but if you look up the year 1886, you'll see what great artist made way for me.

"The laws of genius have not been worked out yet; but, of course, they will be. Kant calls it 'the unborn quality by which nature prescribes the rule to art.' For 'the rule' I should say 'a road.' Genius is only one road of many — just a natural thing, like idiocy or the norm of mind.

"There is a bore here, and I have followed Pater's example and pretended to be a greater fool than I am, and so out-bored him. The experiment was splendidly successful. You remember Pater used to pretend mediocrity, and would agree with the veriest duffer, because bitter experience had taught him the folly of doing anything else. You can never make a fool know that he's a fool, and to try to do so is to be merely a fool yourself. So when this man began bothering me about archaic art, I looked blank, and told him that I was not interested in the old rubbish painted by monks and saints. Naturally he thought I was weak in my head, so I escaped him. To out-bore bores is a very fine art, and worth practising. You need it at every turn in this world.

"You need it now; but a bore on paper can al-

ways be treated as he deserves to be, and shut up or torn up as the case demands.

" Loveday, I have never, never had a gift that was so welcome as your poem. It is beautiful, and part of yourself. To say that only you could have written it just like that is to praise it very much.

" Gratefully yours,

" BERTRAM DANGERFIELD."

CHAPTER XXXI

MICHELANGELO

DANGERFIELD came back, and Stella and Annette deplored it.

"We must look after her a little more ourselves as long as we stop here," said the elder to her sister; and when Loveday announced that on the following day she and Dangerfield were going to work at Michelangelo, to her surprise, Miss Neill-Savage announced that she looked forward to doing the like.

"I've been meaning to refresh my memory for some time," she said. "The Academia, of course?"

"Yes, and the Bargello and the Sacristy of San Lorenzo," said Loveday.

"Into the Medici Chapel I don't go," answered the elder lady. "I visited it many years ago, and it struck so cold that I had a chill which took me a month to throw off. You can see the casts of the tombs at the Academia."

"I'm afraid Bertram won't be satisfied with those. I've enjoyed everything already; but this time we're going in a solemn and industrious spirit."

They found the painter at the Bargello chatting with a brother artist who was making a large drawing of the courtyard. He showed no surprise at seeing Loveday's friend, and when Stella explained that she preferred Donatello to the mightier man, he

admitted that many agreed with her, and that he often did himself.

"It all depends on moods," he said. "Sometimes your mood inclines you one way, sometimes another."

"What if your mood inclines you wrong?" asked Loveday.

"Then you know you are artistically ill, and need physic. But there's a wide range of the best."

They did not stop long at the Bargello, but long enough for Bertram to trouble Miss Neill-Savage. He decried the Dionysus very heartily.

"Michelangelo didn't know the meaning of Dionysus," he told them. "His generation had lost the cult, and it was left for a later one to rediscover it. Upstairs you can see Sansovino's Bacchus. That's a thousand times better. It has the joy of life, and even a hint of fearful power. It is clean, alert, swift, and not drunken. He, too, has a faun, and his faun is better than Michelangelo's."

Loveday insisted on visiting this work, and as they went, Bertram hurt Stella, and she showed it.

"Greek religion was responsible for much of the grandest art in the world," said Bertram, "so you can forgive it everything. Their art was the reward of adoration of beauty. But Christianity mothered no great art. She feared to look upon the human body. Its light dazzled her, so she turned its glory into sin and made the clean unclean. Therefore she was properly cursed with barrenness — the punishment for despising beauty."

"Indeed, that is nonsense," said Stella, sharply. "To sweep away all Christian art in that hoity-toity fashion!"

"You don't understand. I was going to explain. What I mean is that Christianity had no resources in herself. The Renaissance has, I grant, adorned and bedecked Christianity with unutterable loveliness. But where did that loveliness come from? From the things that Christianity hates. It was not she that wakened men and led them back to the Golden Age. It was the humanist spirit, moving like sunshine on the face of the dark mediæval waters. Into the old was woven the new; but it is purely a matter of opinion whether the new spirit, for which Christianity and progress were responsible, bore a better art. The dynamic against the static — the unrest, wonder, seeking, sorrowing, writhing of the Renaissance against the orbicular completeness, sureness, directness of the Greeks. To me the difference between darkness and light."

"If you were a Christian, you would see at a glance the gulf fixed between them," said Miss Neill-Savage, severely and almost scornfully. "Men knew that they had souls at the Renaissance, and it is that knowledge that makes the difference and lifts their art far, far above the best of pagan things. You are a sad materialist. And I like Michelangelo's Bacchus much better than this, just because he exposes the worthless pretensions of the old religion and makes the god little more than a sensuous, soulless imbecile."

But the painter was not prepared to answer her attack, for it entailed a lengthy exposition. Moreover, the lady stood very fairly for the other side. It was clear that Dionysus could by no possibility be made to appeal to Miss Neill-Savage and her order.

"We'll stick to Michelangelo, then," he said, "and see life with his sad and doubtful eyes."

They went to the Academia, and he showed them those dim, stormy monsters rescued from base uses at the Bobili. They considered the David, and Miss Neill-Savage argued that the artist could work in the spirit of the Old Testament as well as of the New.

Dangerfield asked her if she were familiar with the master's sonnets, and she answered that she was not. When, therefore, she left them, and they went to the Sacristy alone, he called at a book-shop and bought the translations of Symonds.

"They'll puzzle her like the deuce," he said; "and if she reads them, she'll see that the poet wasn't all Christian, at any rate. The woe of the world never sank deeper into a great man's spirit than it sank into his; but I shall always say that marble isn't the right medium for agony. You would think that sorrow had not yet homed upon earth when the Greeks made their best; but when this man worked, you would suppose that sorrow was the only goddess humanity served. He whetted his chisel with tears; he worked in a fury of anguish sometimes — rushed to work as many men do to drink — to escape the gnawing torture of his own thoughts. I think that explains so many incomplete things. They say he left this leonine head of the Twilight unfinished — to get colour. That's the way great critics talk. But I am a rationalist, and I believe that he worked it a shadow too small for the enormous torso, and dared not take another grain of marble dust off it. The awful fire that burned in him and through him — his conquering demon that drove him

to begin eternally — led him into a frenzied attack on the marble sometimes; and sometimes, like lesser men, being human, he erred. He would have been the first to confess it, and his errors were among his sadnesses. I am an artist, and know."

"But he's sublime always," she said. "I find myself whispering before him. You don't whisper before any of the others."

"To be Fate-haunted and struggling against mighty powers mightily is sublime. That's what he was doing, and that's what his statues are doing. He martyrs them. They're always fighting a losing battle. You want to see 'Dawn' in the twilight of morning to understand her. Talk of Miss Neill-Savage's chill! The risen sun can't warm you very soon after you come to this stone in the first light of day. I was allowed to keep vigil here, as a great favour, and I have seen morning steal to her. I've seen her wake on her rack and move!"

They stood silent for a time.

"Michelangelo's head was Greek; his heart was Renaissance humanist — tinctured with all that those throbbing times stood for," declared Bertram. "I suppose, from a pure art point of view, you would say he was cursed with such a mighty weight of Aidôs or compassion, that he had to knead sorrow into the very substance of his ideal beauty. He could not picture one without the other. The 'Dawn' is his masterpiece to me. She is waking to her work a virgin, and terribly dreading it. She will never sleep again; she will never be like Night, the mother, her labours ended and her part in the universal tragedy played. And what was the mother's reward, by

the way? Bliss and the joys of Heaven? No — eternal sleep and unconsciousness — a pagan ideal. These women are in the grand manner of the Greek goddesses. You cannot love them. They stand for a power to will and suffer beyond the lot of men."

"The Pieta at Rome is more to me," she said, "though I have only seen pictures and casts."

"It is very great, if you regard it as universal and not particular," he said.

"You cannot deny the Christian inspiration of that?" she asked.

"The inspiration is hidden. It may have been Christian, or it may have been personal. One never knows the seed from which a particular flower of art grows. The spirit is divinely maternal — yes, and Christian too. It would be churlish to deny it."

He turned to the book of sonnets.

"Again and again at the end he cries for increased faith. Not a mere attitude with such a man — not a pose to make sonnets from. He really felt the darkness of doubt; but I don't suppose that he ever reflected as to what his religion had done for his art. He is pleading for faith and protesting that it is his own fault he lacks it. He was a pagan, and didn't know it.

> "That gift of gifts, the rarer 'tis, the more
> I count it great; more great, because to earth
> Without it neither peace nor joy is given."

Little of peace or joy had he, and thought, perhaps, that his misery was the result of weak faith, instead of springing from too much."

"Wasn't he happier at the end?" she asked; but the other shook his head.

"I used to like to think that old age meant something worth having for him, when the fire of creative genius, that had torn him like the vulture tore Prometheus, was cold and the world had passed beyond his ken. I used to fancy him in a sort of twilight happiness still making beautiful things with words, though to fight the eternal marble was beyond his power. But the last sonnets show him still himself, beating the bars — impatient — fiery — waiting — ill content."

He read again from the little book: —

"Blind is the world; and evil here below
O'erwhelms and triumphs over honesty:
The light is quenched; quenched too is bravery;
Lies reign, and truth hath ceased her face to show.

"When will the day dawn, Lord, for which he waits
Who trusts in Thee? Lo, this prolonged delay
Destroys all hope and robs the soul of life."

But his last poems were all prayers — humble, trustful, even hopeful. I suppose he died a devout and perfect Christian."

"If he had only been born a Greek," said Loveday, "how much happier his mighty spirit would have been!"

"And how much greater his art. That holds of Goethe, too. But Goethe fought his way back to the pagan standpoint — for a time, at any rate. The old gods were his brothers and sisters. He belonged to them in spirit always. He had a sunnier heart.

He was never morbid — a good man of business even — and made art of every twinge of emotion. He couldn't have taken his country's troubles to heart as Michelangelo did, and let them come between him and making of beautiful things. He didn't feel as much even as I feel about Rome. He had the immense selfishness and self-control only to let that dominate him which he thought worth while. He was never obsessed by anything that didn't matter — except in his valiant and futile attempt to learn to paint. Self-culture was his god, and the world might go to rack and ruin as long as that business didn't stand still. If only Winckelmann had met him at Rome instead of being murdered at Trieste! Even at Rome, which hurts me and makes me mad, because I see the mark of the Unclean Animal over everything, and feel it is only a rubbish-heap now — a plate of bones that Time has gnawed and deserted — even at Rome, Goethe was just himself. When he went into the Forum there were no hysterics! And his eyes were as much upon the weeds, for that immortal, primitive, vegetable form that he was after, as they were upon the ruins. He lacked what they call the historical sense — the pathos of history that overwhelms Michelangelo didn't touch him; but instead he had a glorious, sure instinct for nature and a hatred for everything intrinsically hideous, that made him turn from archaic art of every sort and only concern himself with the best that man had made."

"Didn't the archaic interest him?" she asked, and Bertram declared that it did not.

"The evolution of art seldom interests a creator,"

he said. "For Goethe art clarified life, and helped him to see everything in its true perspective. That was what the much mightier soul of Michelangelo never reached to. He fretted about what didn't matter a button; he would have scorned Goethe's preoccupation with science as folly, and held the passing political tragedy of his own age a thousand times more important than any discovery of the principles of light, or a starting-point for green things."

"It is interesting to read great minds before Michelangelo," said Loveday. "Ruskin detests him."

"Yes, because hosts of small and common men were led astray by him, and tried to copy the work of his passion without feeling his passion. Ruskin ought to have understood. Reynolds came here, too, and thought he liked the seventeenth-century rubbish better than the big things! Guido and Baroccio and Vasari he praised. He held John of Bologna sometimes greater than Michelangelo. But he appreciated my Masaccio, and glimpsed his mightiness; and, at the end, he came to the right and proper attitude and set Michelangelo above them all. He deliberately closed his public career with that sacred name on his lips."

"That was fine," said Loveday.

They spoke of Winckelmann again.

"I blush for being rich when I think that such a man was poor," declared the painter. "The immortal pagan pretending to be a Catholic — to get to Rome! And is his masterpiece the worse because its very creation demanded that pretence from the creator? You can't whitewash it or talk nonsense about

it. It was a splendid lie, and magnificently justified. It stands among the grand lies of history."

Before he left her, he handed her a slip of paper.

"A rhyme for your poem," he said. "A sonnet on Michelangelo's 'Dawn.' It was made a long time ago, in the first hour that I ever saw it."

He left her, and she stood on the steps of Santa Maria Novella presently and read it to the noise of Florence surging through the piazza.

"Sister of twilight chill and shuddering air,
Stretched desolate upon the rack of morn;
Thou hooded grief from mountain marble torn,
Gazing sad-lidded on the sky's despair,
While the grey stars, like tears, descend forlorn;
Earth's broken heart and man's unsleeping care
Wait on thy pillow, crying to be borne —
The only burden thou shalt ever bear.
No infant hope may dream on thy deep breast;
No little lip may soothe with infant might
Thy mouth's immortal woe; for thee, oppressed,
Dawn dim epiphanies beyond all light,
Where man's long agony and cry for rest
But torture dayspring into darker night."

Why, Loveday knew not, but the sonnet, instead of bringing back Buonarroti's "Dawn," awoke the memory of a vanished day, and she stood in spirit and looked again into the sweet, haunted eyes of Botticelli's Venus. She told herself that the picture stood for personal tribulation, and would evermore strike sorrow's chord when she thought upon it. The grief of the marble titans was the world's grief; the little Venus echoed her own.

CHAPTER XXXII

WORRY

"If you must go to Cadenaggio, you must," said Bertram. "But it's all English — pure, unadulterated, solid, conservative English, with a church and a chaplain, and golf links, and everything complete."

"We must. Stella has a great personal friend there, and the chaplain is the personal friend's husband."

"Como is a vision of glory, and the walks are divine. I was painting there two years ago, and I met a bald, breezy, brave Briton in the garden, and he asked me my handicap. For a moment I failed to understand, then had an inspiration, and explained that I didn't play golf. His frank, blue eyes roamed over mountains and lake and grew clouded. 'Not play golf?' he asked blankly. 'Then what on earth do you come here for? This is golf or nothing!' I broke it to him that I was a professional painter, and he grew gentle and moderated his attack, as one does before those of weak mind. He was a real good chap, and the others were all the same — all bald, brave, breezy, and conservative. And the dear old chaplain was the baldest, bravest, breeziest of them all. Jolly, reactionary men. They read the *Daily Mail* in the morning, and in the evening, if not too weary, they read the *Daily Mail* again."

"Are you really coming?" she asked. "I should dearly like it. But there's not the least reason why you should."

"I might do a week if your friends won't be nasty to me. They are getting jolly restive. They don't understand our friendship in the least. They forget how wise they were when they were young. There's a cliff in the Val Sanagra I tried to do, and failed. I want it for a picture, and might, of course, try again."

But Miss Neill-Savage liked it little when she heard that the painter was coming to Como.

"It's not the place for him," she said — "or the people. He'll be bored, and then he'll be rude, and doubtless put his foot in it. Besides, what does he want to come for?"

"To paint a certain thing in the Val Sanagra," explained Loveday.

Then Annette spoke:

"You know your own business, my dear, and I fancy you take a sort of stupid pride in being unconventional, and so forth. But you'll forgive me if I say it is a pity. You are putting Stella and me to a good deal of inconvenience and discomfort. Not that we mind; only is it right?"

"It's absolutely right," declared Loveday, but her lip shook for a second.

When she was gone, the sisters discussed her without sympathy. Indeed, they had been very patient, but their patience was naturally, exhausted.

"I shall write as strongly as I can to Lady Vane again," said Annette.

"I don't know — the whole thing is very danger-

ous and difficult. You remember how Sir Ralegh's mother answered your last letter. She longs to break off the match. This will only be another pretext. She never liked Loveday. They were bound to be antipathetic. And if you can make the man see with her eyes—"

"Italy's ruined her," declared Annette. "Italy and this wretched painter between them. Why on earth doesn't Sir Ralegh come out or order her home?"

"Because he doesn't know anything whatever about it. Or perhaps—it's a horrid thought—but perhaps he *does* know all about it, and is giving Loveday rope enough to hang herself with."

The other shook her head.

"No—no. He isn't that sort. He certainly doesn't know. However, I shall write to Lady Vane. For two pins I'd write to her son."

"For heaven's sake, Annette—! You see, when it comes to words, there's really nothing you can say. It's only a most unconventional sort of friendship. There's no attachment."

"There must be," said the younger. "A man—a young, busy, ambitious man like Bertram Dangerfield wouldn't dance across Italy with any girl for friendship. And you know what Cadenaggio is. If they go careering about together all alone, everybody in the hotel will be talking. There are sure to be people there who know of Sir Ralegh's engagement. No, I shall write, and write strongly. She ought to get a definite order to go home, and if Sir Ralegh is too proud to send it, as no doubt he will be, then the Admiral ought to do so."

"Why not write to him, Annette?"

"No, I write to Lady Vane. You can write to Admiral Champernowne. I tell you frankly that I think it would be a good thing for the Vanes if this engagement was broken off."

"For heaven's sake, Annette — ! Do be careful. It is not for us to think about it. We may be ruining young lives. Suppose that happened, and Loveday's career was shattered?"

"It would be her own fault entirely. I'm feeling exceedingly bitter. Our visit to Italy has largely been spoiled by these young fools. One cannot ignore the responsibility."

"It was never suggested there was any."

"But we very soon found out that it existed. And I'm not at all sure if we did right to do nothing. It's a hateful business altogether, and shows great selfishness and bad feeling, in my opinion. She can't really be wrapt up in her betrothed — otherwise she would not gaily go on stopping out here; and certainly she would not devote all her time to another man."

"You can't say she does that. She works fearfully hard in her own way — at culture and Italian, and all the rest of it."

"Well, there's no culture at Cadenaggio," declared Annette; "and if he stops a day over the week, I shall speak to him. I'm old enough to be his mother, and I shall talk very straight indeed, and not mince words."

"He doesn't seem to realise in the least."

"But he must be made to do so. These artists are all half-baked in some directions. They're selfish, narrow-minded wretches. They feel in an exagger-

ated sort of ridiculous way about everything — but other people's feelings. They never consider them in the least. So long as their own precious nerves and sensibilities are being pandered to, all the rest of mankind may go hang. In fact, they are a very mixed blessing, and certainly no blessing at all to the unfortunate people who are thrown up against them. And I'd tell him so as soon as look at him. To hear him talk about the 'brave, bald, breezy Englishmen' at Cadenaggio! It's so supercilious and insulting. Especially when you know that any one of them would be worth a dozen of him, if it came to doing anything useful and heroic and gentlemanly!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

IN THE HILLS

A MOUNTAIN, whose summits and highest glens were deep in snow, rose, rent and jagged, to one brooding cumulus that hung above it and curled on the blue like a silver dragon. Presently the cloud furled its pinions and settled upon the peak. All the sky was radiant azure save for the great cloud; but beneath it one passage of shadow spread across the sunlit snow and rippled as it rose and fell to the contours of the land. There life fought for a place on the mountain, and a thin pine wood fretted the snow, where still it haunted ravines and northern faces of cliffs; while below, on the many shoulders of the great peak, whole forests basked green against the spurs and crags that broke from their verdancy to buttress the earth above. Here fell precipices until the lower hills caught them, and little plateaux hung and green slopes nestled on the ledges of stone. Then, by a thousand gentle declivities, there spread and oozed through every valley and beneath every height the work of man, terrace upon terrace, step upon step. Now the trellises of his vines made a green splendour of every knap and knoll, and his olives wound their orchards, like a grey and tattered veil, round each turn and twist of the hills; while breaking from the rolling green, like nests of birds or wedges of brown honeycomb, his hamlets and villages clung and con-

gregated about their little white or rosy campanili. Here the chestnuts lifted their brightness to the girdle of the pines; here again swung out some great marble crag to distribute the awful burden of the mountain.

Sunk in the midst of an immense cup, whose broken lip was a ring of mountains, whose sides were chased and fretted with forests and steep places, jewelled with hamlets, glorified with all the verdure of June, there spread blue water; and round the lake's margin, like a handful of bright shells, the houses clustered.

The hymn of light was being sung over Italy.

Great cloud masses lumbered up presently and discharged their burden of brightness directly upon Como. Light rather than rain they bore, and their splendour was reflected in the water beneath them, to kill the blue and make the liquid mirror shine. This film of brightness spread upon the sky-reflecting waters, and currents of wind also touched them, until the deep fluttered into transitory darkness at their pressure. The last enchanter to move on land and lake indifferently was shadow; and more wonderful than the reflections of the light, there wound and stretched wine-purple stains over the water, where the forms of the high clouds were flung down upon the face of it. They seemed ponderable, and sank from the surface to colour the very depths; while amid their patterns and stains of lapis-lazuli the sun shone upon the lake and woke rich blues and greens, that embroidered the shadow shapes with the network of winding enamels and followed their changing outlines as they spread and passed again. Very magical was the sleight that shadow played with the shore

also. It flew over forests and mountains, like a flock of violet birds; it hid whole villages beneath its gloom, and then lifted and revealed the vanished places again aglow in the sunlight.

But all this detail and harmonious splendour was as nothing to the incarnate spirit of light that gave birth to it. Light quickened noon, and throbbed through the veins of the earth. From cloud to mountain, from mountain to the least flower that homed thereon, the spirit forgot nothing, but swept land and sky with a presence like a bloom — a blessed aura that crowned all things in earth and heaven; an ineffable glory of melting, magic blue that soaked all matter like a tincture, and spread Demeter's own veil, woven of violet and gentian, between Persephone and every eye that might gaze and grow dim at sight of her.

"It's the something between," said Bertram to Loveday — "the something that only Turner ever got. It beats every man who touches Italy. It's such a comfort sometimes to look at things you needn't try to paint — impossible miracles like this. Then you can just be happy; but if there's a picture, then one begins to trouble."

Loveday ate cherries and fanned herself. They sat together and rested above Breglia, on the shoulder of Cima-Grona. They gazed down upon Como, with Bellagio in the midst, with snowy Grigna towering above Varenna on their left hand and green Crocione on their right.

Loveday reclined in a nest of wild flowers, and the blue and yellow, purple and rose, made a fair setting for her in her white linen dress.

"Ten minutes," he said, "and we're off again. And you are quite wrong to eat those cherries. You'll want them more at the top than you do now."

"Listen to the bells," she answered, "and don't speak. They're so different to our formal bells, that always seem to be repeating the responses. These talk to each other naturally — question and answer — and seem to think between."

Then she spoke of the climb.

"I saw heath and eye-bright coming up the hill. They put me in mind of dear old Haldon."

"Did they? And what on earth do you want to be put in mind of dear old Haldon for?" he asked. Then he answered himself.

"But I know. When I'm in England I always welcome a twinkle of colour, or a note of music, or the flash of a brown eye that puts me in mind of Italy. So will you when you go back."

"I know I shall. This is my home. I feel it more and more every day and every hour. I cried when I saw Como first."

"You're not the first girl who has done that. You never found nature so flagrantly sentimental before, and I doubt if you will again."

"It doesn't seem real," she said. "I was writing to Ralegh last night, and trying to describe it, and telling him that the lake and the green hills and grey mountains, and the villages and churches and cypresses and sunshine all seemed arranged and planned too perfectly — like a theatre. It's so thought out — to the very oleanders and roses and weeping willows tumbling into the water. And the great grown men fishing and catching tiny finger-

lings, that ought to be put back to grow up; and the women with their little wooden pattens, that whisper together as they walk; and the mulberries and corn and maize and vine and olive — it's all like happy light opera somehow. One feels the curtain will come down, and we shall go out into the dark."

"Yes, it's unreal till you know it far better than we do. Even in storm, with thunder rolling over the mountains and the lake running in waves and showing her little white teeth, there is nothing impressive. It's only like a pretty woman in a temper."

"Yet I've never seen anything so obviously and distractingly lovely in my life," admitted Loveday. "Never was a flower so blue as the mountains. Will it wear, or shall I get tired of it?"

"You'll get tired of it," he prophesied. "The lake is too assertive and rhetorical. There were tears in my eyes, too, the first time I saw it; the second time I kept my nerve; the third time — this time — I yawned. The bitter truth about Como is that she can't keep up the force of her first impact. You might compare her to fine, light music, as you say — wholly delightful and all that many men have the power to appreciate. But there is scenery, as there is art, in the austere air of which only those can live who come with long apprenticeship and prayer and fasting. You don't get a really swagger taste in art without working for it; and more you do in nature. But people work at art; they don't work at nature. The critics sneer at artists who work at nature. There are leading novelists who think a country walk is only an excuse for talking, and keeping their own bodies in health. They understand men and women;

but that's all. No doubt Como wins a sentimental throb from every soul who sees it for the first time; but the people who come back to it again and again and are satisfied with it are not connoisseurs of nature."

"Perhaps the Swiss lakes are sterner? This is a lovely toy, anyway, if it is nothing more, and I don't feel I shall ever see anything so dear and gentle and sweet again. I passed a little funeral yesterday, and even death seemed a part of the picture. One would have thought a funeral a false note and merely bad taste here; but it fitted in. Death was no king of terrors. I seemed to see him as a gracious figure showing some worn-out human child a shady corner where she might lie down and sleep."

He smiled.

"Yes — we laugh at superstition, forgive everybody everything, sympathise with the smugglers who try to get tobacco and salt across the mountain, and copy the people, even to these hemp slippers we're wearing."

"I want to go on making believe — I never want to wake up," declared Loveday; but she sighed as she spoke, for she knew that she had wakened up.

This man was her life, but must forever remain outside it. The great discovery had not burst upon her, or she might have fled before it and escaped the full heart of the storm; but it had crept upon her, so gradually and surely that the process was unobserved and its incidence unmarked. Looking back, she could not tell when the truth had taken shape and stared into her heart with unsleeping eyes. It had been born so slowly that the very form and sub-

stance of it were not appreciated in the making. Sometimes she felt as though it was only when he went away to Siena that she had really begun to like him; and sometimes she looked back, along the line of golden hours that she had passed beside him, and guessed that she had been loving him ever since she came into Italy. But this was not so. A psychologist possessing power to trace the friendship would have set his finger on this mountain meadow where Loveday now sat; he would have listened to her sigh and looked into her eyes that were looking at the man. It did not signify that she ate cherries and he gulped Chianti from a flagon: that was the moment when, out of mist and uncertainty, delicate questionings and stout self-assurances that no such thing could happen to a betrothed woman who loved him. And had a cherry-tree in fulness of time sprung from a stone that she cast away, it might have stood to mark the very temple of the new-born passion, and in years to come lift its sheaf of snow and sparkle of blood-red fruit above the spot where young Loveday's heart was lost.

She gave a little gasp, stared at Bertram as though he were a stranger, then turned from him and buried her brown face in the grass and wept.

He divined that she was crying, but dreamed not of the reason. He smiled to himself. "Just like a girl," he thought, "to choose absolutely the wrong place in the conversation for tears!" Then he got up and took the knapsack, and left her.

"I've drunk the Chianti," he said, "and I'm going to rinse the flask and fill it with water at the fountain down here. I'll be back in a minute. Then

we'll push on. We must get to that streak of snow, or perish in the attempt."

She made no answer, and he left her for half an hour. But she had started to climb when he returned, and he overtook her five hundred feet higher up. Then he strove to brighten her thoughts.

"When you look at the kingdoms outspread like this, you feel vexed with those art critics who will have it that art can teach nature such a lot," he said. "I know you'll tell me I'm contradicting myself; but that don't matter. The ideal must be rooted in the real; we must be kind to this many-coloured, wonderful dust, for the dust is the great-great-great-grandfather of us all. The chalice that holds the wine of all life is dust. Every seed of man and beast and flower has got to be planted in it. Without earth, all seed might as well be stone. We are the children of earth and water and the grandchildren of fire — the same stuff that goes to make these mountains and this lake. And so are the lilies, and the gazelle, and the leopard, and everything in the world that is lovely. And Nature's always at her potter's wheel, moulding and remoulding, sweeping away, trying again, working out blind alleys, then coming back to the main road. Why evolution maddens Nietzsche and his disciples, I cannot guess. It ought to have been the sword in his hand; and if he discovered it, he would have seen it was worth his own fetich of eternal recurrence a thousand times over. You can trace it through and through art, and the Ruler Art is just as logically an outcome of sound steps taken in the dawn of things as the Slave Art is the outcome of false steps. Nietzsche sneers at Darwin and Spencer, and

never had the courage to confess to himself that his Superman could not have come to him, until he found himself on the road those pioneers had blazed."

He broke off, was silent a moment, and then rattled on again:

"Most of the swell writers in England are committing the sin against the Holy Ghost, and only using art for propaganda nowadays. The mightiest men never did that, and never will. It's an awfully serious sign, in my opinion. Of course, every great masterpiece preaches, but no artist ought to be a preacher. In England they preach eternal sermons on the stage and in their novels, and call it realism! They are after the truth — a fearful thing — a starving, petrifying thing — a mare's nest — the death of art."

"Nietzsche declares art is with us that we should not perish through truth," said Loveday.

She had not spoken since he returned to her — indeed, he had not given her a chance to do so. Her voice fluttered a little.

"Of course he does. Because he knows that truth is in another category. Truth doesn't belong to masterpieces. Is mighty music true? Is Greek tragedy true? Is Swinburne true? Are this lake and these mountains true? You didn't say 'How true' to Michelangelo's 'Dawn.' The real masters, whatever their medium, knew that beauty was greater than truth; but this generation says, 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'; it talks about the 'beauty of ugliness'; I wonder it doesn't talk about the 'ugliness of beauty.' Of course, in a spiritual sense, truth may be beautiful; and so may a lie; but art is

above truth, just as ethics is above good or evil, and Nature above kindness or cruelty."

"I thought nothing could be greater than truth," she said.

"Even if it were so, truth is clean out of reach for very good reasons," he answered, "and the thing that our swagger artists give us to-day is no more the whole truth of life than our side is the whole truth of the moon. By artists, I mean the writers — the novel-writers and dramatists, because my craft has stopped thinking altogether, and the best of us are only house decorators. They never try to say anything at all — no doubt because they've got nothing to say. But the writers — the 'realists' — the men who paint the woe of the world and sit like Jonahs on their middens and cry naked misery, and laugh or sneer at the rationalists and moral leaguers and eugenists and men of science and all the brave people who are trying to *do* something — these image-breakers, who shudder at idealism in every shape or form, and give us their dust and ashes and say, 'This is the truth, and there's nothing greater' — I tell you that they are voices in the wind. There are a hundred things greater than the deepest truth we shall ever hear from them."

"Faith and hope are greater, perhaps," she said.

"Yes, and love, and the antique spirit. Poetry is the greatest thing in the whole world — not in the limited sense of writing or painting or music, but in the grand, universal sense of living. Every life is a poem, and the least life is greater in its majesty and dominion than the mightiest epic, or fresco, or symphony. To create your own life and make it a

beautiful work! What medium compares with your own days and months and years!"

"We can all be artists at that rate — conscious or unconscious," she answered; "but think what the days and months and years of most people amount to. Think what sort of material they are to make a beautiful poem. And these writers you talk about so impatiently — they feel that. They are idealists, whether they hate the word or not, because they want everybody's life to have the possibilities of beauty; and they try to show the world that the material for beauty-making isn't fairly divided."

But he would not grant even this.

"They have no imagination to see that different orders of men, derived from different ancestry, need different happiness, and not the same happiness. They talk about equality; but the poor don't want equality; they only want their own ideals, not ours; and we must be firm there, or we head straight for anarchy. You think it's easy for a rich girl, like you, and a rich man, like me, to make poetry of our lives, as we are doing; but it's harder for us than for them really, because we are better endowed and admit far higher standards. Art and life demand more from us — more self-denial, more patience, more bravery to face difficult and dangerous things. Only the poor are free."

"The Socialists would call that cant," she said. "They declare that there's nothing in blood, and that money and education make all the difference."

"But they know better in their hearts. They know that the great spirits, sent into the world to carry on great traditions, bend under burdens the

poor could not bear. 'It is the top of the mountain that the lightning strikes.' Of course, blood is nonsense, and the big men spring more often from the soil than from the ancient lines. Aristocracy belongs to the soul of man, not his carcase. But the poor in spirit — Christ blessed them; and I think, if any deserve blessing, it is the rich in spirit — the gifted ones — the creators — they who, out of their wealth, pour ceaselessly for those who lack it; who wear themselves out for the joy of the world; who give and give and give and weary never, like the fountain, or the music of the trees. They are above earthly payments: you cannot recompense them: you can only bless them. And the artists come first and highest in that band — the brave artists, with faces that smile and hidden hearts that throb under the awful demands of their Mistress. Are these men to dwell in the huts of Socialism with the herd? Are they to be denied everything the world can give them and made to share the ideal of slaves?"

He flung himself down where a stunted whitethorn made a little shadow on the sun-scorched hill.

"I'm empty; I must eat," he said; "and so must you."

But she was interested now, and not hungry. While he spread the luncheon she asked another question:

"Mustn't art have anything to do with ugliness?" she asked.

"Art may interpret ugliness. Given the artist great enough to handle them, all things are within her province. Then ugliness ceases to be the word. Take Gauguin's Tahiti women — solemn, archaic

lumps of red earth. I understand what he meant by them and honour his purpose. You can be greater than ugliness, just as you can be greater than beauty. You can rise above ugliness or beauty. But to me a thing of beauty is a joy forever, and to be a thing of ugliness is not. That's a terribly severe test — the eternal joy. A work of art that can ride over the storms of centuries and still give joy to the finest taste is never ugly. But it is the rarest thing in the world. Evolution fights against such a work. Beethoven is called milk for babes by modern connoisseurs of the highest that music is supposed to have reached; and there are apparently sane men writing who would burn everything in the National Gallery and start again — with the post-impressionists. I suppose they would also grind all marble to dust until Rodin carved it."

"A work of art must be pretty wonderful to keep its head up, even for a century or two?" she asked him.

Bertram agreed with her.

"But remember that it is not truth that saves it," he said. "This twaddle about remorseless truth is pettifogging — a mere wild-goose chase. Another thing: there's a deadly distrust of Science among artists, as a rule — an instinctive hatred of it. I hate to hear artists snapping and snarling at Science — as the Church used to do — and just as fruitlessly. The last word on this earth will always be spoken by Science, and if Art or Science had to pack up and leave the planet, it wouldn't be Science. She doesn't understand us; but she's always respectful and polite to us."

He ate and drank, and made Loveday eat and drink.

"Truth-seekers in art are a bore to you, then?" she asked.

"A very great bore," he admitted. "They are like beginners picking over a rubbish-heap: they don't know what to take and what to leave. So they bag the lot, and give you everything, down to the dust of the cinders, and the broken bottles, and the odours, and call the result 'truth.' They are welcome to such truth; but they are not welcome to the lie of calling such truth beauty."

"They are honest, all the same, and in deadly earnest," she said. "The grim earnest of their works is the greatest thing in them."

"They are children of this generation — unlike us, who belong to the past. They are little worms gnawing the core of the time; and I'm sorry for them. Ruskin said that the mass of society was made up of morbid thinkers and miserable workers. And that was fifty years ago. What would he say to-day? Of course, the rich we have always with us — the brainless, heartless, worthless rich, who don't think — morbidly or otherwise, and the cheerful loafers, as well as the miserable workers, and the envious and the jealous and the sulky workers. But our artists are just as morbid and sentimental and self-conscious as the people they write about. They are in it and of it. Where the old order is dying and rotting; where faith is the melting-pot; where the horizon is dark with strife and bitterness and class prejudice and sex war, there must be morbidity. We are fast getting to the time when this morbidity is going to

make England jolly ill — perhaps an invalid for the rest of her natural life. And she's getting the wrong doctoring. They're giving her liniment, and she wants pills. But it may be old age, and, of course, you can't do much for that."

"How glorious if Art, with a big A, could make her young again!" cried Loveday.

"Art will never have a serious voice in the affairs of the world as it is," he answered; "and I, for one, hate to see men, who have proved themselves great artists, standing on tubs in a row with professional politicians and publicists, and shouting their nostrums in the fair, with the quacks, and joining the chorus of public men who yelp the passing hour. They ought to be doing their own work, which is better."

"The Greek artists all added something to their lives," she argued. "They didn't live in their studies and studios. They fought for their country and took a leading place in affairs. Michelangelo didn't mind building walls to keep her enemies out of Firenze. Then why shouldn't artists do something to make England stronger and wiser, if they can?"

"It's the times," he answered. "We are all specialists now. Life was a simple, ingenuous, glorious thing in the Golden Age. Now it's neither simple nor ingenuous — though still glorious. Æschylus fought at Salamis, but Tennyson didn't go to the Crimea. Thucydides was admiral of a fleet in Thrace; but if we asked Mr. Bernard Shaw to take over a cruiser squadron when we next go fighting — well, perhaps he might — for the sake of the experi-

ence; but I don't think he would. He'd be too busy about things that mattered more. Fifth-century Athens was different. The times have degenerated. Our artists talk about anything and everything; but how many things would they fight for? How many would they even pay other people to fight for? Men don't go face to face with men, to drag art out of them nowadays — not even as Dickens did. They concoct their human beings in the study. They are all pessimists and fly from optimism. The 'intellectuals' would probably agree without division that an optimist must be, by the fact itself, weak-minded. The times have changed, and only the very greatest men, or the very greatest fools, can placidly endure their own times. But our 'intellectuals' are neither, so they can't endure them. They either freeze into mere ice, and reflect existence through their own chill temperaments; or become sentimental about life, and sob over the sprained ankle of a daddy-long-legs; or dive and burrow and wriggle away from reality into the moonlit loveliness of Irish dreaming."

"I'm sure our own time is the best for us," said Loveday. "But not because we are fools."

"No; because it's the *same* time," he answered instantly. "Any time would have been the best for me that found you in the world."

But the gravity of the statement and its chivalry were disarmed by his apparent flippant indifference. They ate and made merry; and presently ancient rocks, that seldom echoed to any sound save thunder, sent back their laughter to them from a steep place.

CHAPTER XXXIV

PROMETHEUS

A GREAT scarp broke out of the green mountain, lifted its crest raggedly, then fell forward by savage steps, each steeper than the last, until starkly it dropped to within a hundred feet of the torrent bed beneath. Here it seemed that the unsleeping water had bored the cliff and fretted away its marble bases, for the rocks overhung fearfully, with the threat of peril that belongs by implication to such places. The cliffs were scored with darker passages upon the grey, and each step and cleft of them supported a young chestnut tree, rowan, or horn-beam. Beyond the crag towered Crocione, with precipices dragged round it like a garment, and its crown in clouds; while far below stood the brown hamlet of Granola about a red church tower.

The river, shrunk to a crystal thread laced with foam, twined through the bottom of the gorge, where all was a litter of mighty rocks and green things fringing them. The waters shouted to the hills, and they lifted their echoes higher and higher, fainter and fainter, until the last whisper died beneath the summits of the mountains. In the valley, among the grey and green acclivities, there stared out torn, worn patches, like rusty wounds upon the hills. They marked where charcoal burners laboured, stripped

the pelt of the brush, and calcined their wood. A feather of smoke swung out beneath the naked spaces, and above them, perched on the wrinkled necks of the heights, a few lonely homes clung together. The tassels of the chestnut were breaking into flower, mile upon mile; the robinia also hung out sweet, white tresses; and every dene and dingle and scrap of standing hay was a feast of flowers.

In a great litter of boulders — marble and granite — Bertram Dangerfield set up his easel, while Loveday roamed and gathered beech fern and wine-coloured columbines. She grew tired presently, and returned to see him making a large, water-colour painting of the cliff-face. Silently, she watched him work.

"I've crucified the Light-Bringer here in my mind. This precipice suggested the picture. It is one of those frowning things that sting the nerves. Here, upon this beautiful limestone, I shall chain Prometheus. You feel that the direct sunshine almost makes the cliff red hot. He sprawls under the glare with his chains fastened to great bolts wedged into the rock. The thing is to suggest his unconquerable life pitted against these unconquerable forces. Beneath him this cavity yawns, and you can feel that it is bottomless; above him you know the crag ceases, so that he is hung here for the day to roast and the night to freeze. Only two sparks of life share the scene with him. In that glimpse of hard, blue sky on the left, where a needle of the rock juts forward, there lurches the vulture; and beneath his feet, as though it would throw a shadow on them and cool them if it could, I have put a great iris —

the loveliest flower that ever I saw — a wonderful, billowy thing, with petals that looked as though they were made from mother-of-pearl. It comes from sun-scorched mountains in Syria, but I found it happy in a garden at Florence, and painted it with joy for this work."

"It will be a glorious, sad, solemn picture if you do Prometheus right," said Loveday.

"His head is the hard thing. One thinks of the Laocoon, but that's not my idea. There will be no agony, rather the pride and patience of a demi-god — in the grip of one stronger than himself. I got a soldier of the King of Italy's bodyguard for the figure — a splendid man — and I arranged a sloping board and chains and everything. He hated it. It really was torment. He could only endure five or six minutes at a time. But I made it worth his while, and it was worth mine. I saw the face in a dream two nights ago. It will be a good thing if I can do it. I've soaked myself in the poets, of course. The writing men can do such a lot we can't — I get jealous of them sometimes. But still we can do some things they can't."

"I should think you could!" declared Loveday.

He stopped presently, set his picture in the sun to dry, and smoked a cigarette. Then he worked on, while Loveday ate her lunch, and later, when the light had shifted and he could do no more, they tramped home together by many a step and slope from the pines to the chestnuts and from the chestnuts to the cherries and olives and dancing vine. Neither was talkative to-day, but both were occupied with many thoughts.

That night a brilliance of summer lightning lit the sky. To the zenith rolled pallid cumuli still of a ghostly white, though in the darkness beyond them stars were shining. Below these pale masses spread tattered black vapours to the crowns of the mountains. Here was a theatre for the lightning, and it frolicked and flashed gold out of the dark clouds and lit the white ones to pure rose. As night thickened, the splendour of the sky was extreme. But no rain fell, and the silence between the thunderclaps was only broken by prattle of voices in the verandah of the hotel. Under the trees of the garden fire-flies stole, flashed their tiny lights against the lightning, and reminded Loveday of the past. Florence already seemed sunk in far-off time.

CHAPTER XXXV

LOVEDAY TO RALEGH

" CADENAGGIO, *Sunday.*

" MY DEAR RALEGH,

" I am dreadfully startled by your letter, and, I suppose, ought to be quite crushed by a criticism so severe. But it is a fact that out here, so far from you, there is an unreality about these hard sayings — I suppose because I don't really deserve them, or you don't really mean them. We are engaged to be married, and you, knowing that and knowing me, can still write to me as though I were a child and not a woman — and a naughty child at that.

" Ralegh, I am never going to be dictated to, or lectured, or driven, by you or anybody. I have found out here that I am a reasonable, intelligent creature, and, what is far, far more than that, I have found that I have got my own little, precious gift from Providence. Italy woke it up and England couldn't. It isn't painting. Bertram Dangerfield has very definitely proved to me that I have not the least faculty for painting; but it is — don't laugh — verse-making. Fancy you wanting to marry a girl who makes verses — a girl with a glimmer of poetry in her! You won't believe it; but wait until I come home and get something printed!

" It happened queerly, and I can't exactly tell you

how after your letter. But I will when I come home.

"Ralegh, dear, you mustn't think that I'm a fool. It hurts me when your mother thinks so, as she always does; but if you are going to make the same mistake, I don't honestly see how we can get on. I would marry no man who thought that; and if you have arrived at such a dismal conclusion, because I like Italy better than England and always shall do so to my dying day, then you must be clear, and we will agree that this unexpected development of my character cancels our bargain. I write this in cold blood, and you must not be angry, because it is your letter that makes me do so. If I marry you (or, *if* that is rather too strong, *when* I marry you), I shall very fully recognise the state in life to which I *am* called, with its obligations and duties, and all that you desire from me, and all you have the right as my dear husband to expect from me. I know that my home is your home, and that in England and not Italy it will be. But I am not going to give up my birthright and turn my back on the land that has put a soul into my body. I am not prepared to make that sacrifice. A woman owes something to her soul, Ralegh, dear, and the debt is going to be paid.

"I am not coming home a moment before I choose, and that will be soon. I've made a start with Italian, and learned enough, at any rate, to know that I shall never speak it as well as Bertram Dangerfield. But I've got to speak it somehow. It's like golf rather. You start gaily, and begin fondly to fancy that you are getting on. But there very quickly comes a time when you feel what lies ahead. Climbing the mountains is the same. You go upward hour after hour,

and think you are making a real impression; then comes the time for luncheon, and half the day is gone, and you are still in the green hills or under the grey precipices. The snow and the peaks seem to be as far above you as ever.

"Bertram Dangerfield and I crossed to Varenna yesterday, and climbed into the hills under Grigna. It was just beginning to get interesting, and we even talked of reaching the pass, when crash came the thunder and flash the lightning and dash the rain. It can rain, too! By good chance we reached a cottage, and the folk let us come in out of the weather.

"Altogether it was not a red-letter day, and I'm glad there was no bad news for you. A thing happened that shows how death is always hiding behind life's beautiful, many-coloured tapestry; and how often he sticks his bony fingers through it, just as we are admiring the pattern. A file of four mules were passing us in a narrow, paved way, and the last, without a shadow of warning, suddenly lashed out in my direction, and I felt a steel shoe glittering within three inches of my face. The wretch was round the corner before I realised what had happened, but Bertram felt responsible and was much concerned. Of course, it was not his fault. I suppose the mule has a hateful life, poor wretch, and has been made sour and cynical by starvation and many blows, so when he saw a happy stranger he tried to make her unhappy. They wear great plates, with points to grip the cobblestones, so that if I had been kicked on the head the chances are that you would never have had to lecture your Loveday again.

"Soon after we came across such a pathetic little

CHAPTER XXXVI

REALITY

THE time had come when Loveday and Bertram were called upon to part, and the consciousness of it chilled their companionship a little. He disguised his feelings better than she did; but she, safe in the secret conviction that he did not care for her as she now cared for him, was less at pains to pretend indifference. She often acknowledged her obligations to him, and he as often declared that none existed.

"We've had a good and a great time," he said, "and I've learned ten thousand more things from you than you can have learned from me. One day in your courts is better than a thousand, young Loveday; and think of the number that I've spent in them!"

They climbed five thousand feet to the Dosso di Griante, past the Chapel of Maria, Stella Maris, where still the skulls of those that perished of plague lie flung like loaves beneath the altar. On and on to a green plateau they toiled; and still on, until they reached the crown of the hill. From this height Como spread like a fragment of green shot silk thrown down between the mountains, and Crocione's forest-crowned peak was close at hand. They made their meal where lily-of-the-valley flowered about them.

"'Lily-of-the-mountain,' they should be called," said Loveday. She found, too, many other precious flowers, and greeted with joy the white, golden-eyed rock-rose, for that was a friend from the west country.

To the north of them Piano's little waters cuddled, like a dark cat's eye under the hills, and a great light rained over the northern waters of Como, even to the snow ridges where Italy ended. But Switzerland might not be seen. The north was hidden in a mesh of grey and silver clouds that darkened down upon the mountains and only shredded away into the blue of the zenith.

"The first time I came here was three years ago," he said, "and I sat where we are sitting now and got on to the track of the greatest theory I ever started."

"If it's cheerful, tell it; if it's mournful, keep it to yourself," she answered. "I want to be happy to-day — as happy as I can be."

"What's to prevent you from being perfectly happy?"

"Only the thought that we shall never climb a mountain together again."

"I don't know — I don't see why not. Mountains don't run away."

"Never like this — never like two wild birds!"

"You'll be let out of your cage for a fly sometimes, I suppose?"

"Tell me your theory."

"As to its happiness, it's neither happy nor sad — merely a theory. Looking out here over the world — it was a more glorious day than this — I asked myself why nature can reach perfection just when and where she likes, if she's dealing with the unconscious

and the inanimate, but can't get within a mile of it when conscious intelligence is her material."

"Why 'only man is vile'? I always thought that was a very vile idea," said Loveday.

"He's not vile — far from vile — only among these cowls and crowns of cloud and marble, under the blazing sun, with nothing but an eagle for company, I wondered and wondered why everything round me had its full perfect completion of expression and could declare itself to the very limits of its endowment, while I was an unfinished, fettered thing, destined never to be free, bound by the dire laws of conscious intelligence to be forever incomplete."

"Conscious intelligence is the highest miracle of all. Whatever you believe, you can't doubt that."

"I do doubt it. There's a dreadful side to it. The gain is only won at a terrible cost, because perfection and conscious intelligence can never exist together. We must renounce perfection."

"Super-man will reach it."

"Impossible; it's not a question of degree, but of kind. Self-consciousness can only be run on an everlasting, fundamental lie, and though I admit that truth is a very over-rated commodity in many affairs, in the great central affair, in the struggle for social perfection, you cannot very well expect to get there by the way of untruth. But human life points otherwise, and must. Lying, and not loving, makes the world go round. So there you are; the whole show of humanity is based on falsehood. For self-conscious creatures gregarious existence is impossible on any other foundation whatever. So it follows that perfection is beyond the reach of the children of men."

"But is truth such an impossible thing? And is it so scarce?" asked Loveday.

"Yes; where two or three people are gathered together, there is a lie in the midst of them. They smile while their hearts frown; they laugh while their hearts sulk; they pretend to hope what they fear, and fear what they hope. Naked truth would shatter society far quicker than dynamite. It's so indecent that only unconscious existence can endure to breathe the air of it. Sociology is based on falsehood. Society is simply held together by a cement of falsehood. It is the grand irony — the ceaseless joke for Olympus — that mankind, while they run about day and night crying for truth, fail to see that the very bed-rock of all amenity and inter-relations between man and man and nation and nation must be suppression of truth. The truth-teller would be a pariah instantly. In practice his relations would have him shut up as one of weak mind. The child who tells his grandfather the truth about his bald head is whipped. We stamp truth out of our children from the cradle, and then run about searching for it ourselves."

"Exercise of tact is surely not going to come between us and perfection," she said.

"Only a mind steeped and nurtured in untruth would make that remark," he answered. "We call it 'tact,' because we are all in the same boat, and it would be ugly to tell each other we are all liars. There's not a day passes but I lie to you and you lie to me. We must. We're always acting. We can't help it, and I don't blame us in the least. I'm only sorry for us, and for everybody, that it is so.

The right to lie can be denied to no man, and I go much further than Schopenhauer, for instance, who only permits lying for self-defence and no other reason. But if we may defend ourselves with a lie, may we not defend our neighbors? Consider the inquisition of one's own family and the questions they allow themselves to ask one — questions that are sacred and personal, and ought not to be asked. It isn't enough to refuse to reply; that throws you open to suspicion at once, and sets rumour flying. No, you must reply, and, nine times out of ten, you must lie. A man or woman dares to suggest you are in love with another man's wife or betrothed. Are you going to say 'Yes, I am'? No — those who asked the question deserve to be lied to, and you have not only defence of self but defence of others to consider. Who wouldn't lie to get his mother, or his father, or his child, or his lover out of a fix? And what would the world say to the man who told the truth in such cases?"

"Perfection is impossible, then? We're to be headed off from it forevermore?"

"So it looked to me three years ago, but in your twenties, three years is an age. I've got beyond that now. I stuck there for a bit, and then, one day — in England of all queer places — I started off again on a new tack. You see you must keep tight hold of the great fact that truth and falsehood are human concepts, and you must not take either of them too seriously. So I pictured man on the uneasy couch of life under a patchwork coverlet thrown over him by the Fates. It was a patchwork of lies — red lies about war, white lies about peace, black lies about

'God's in His Heaven, all's well with the world'— green, blue, yellow — every sort of fine old crusted lie. But as the pure, colourless light of day is only broken on the wheel of the rainbow into its separate parts, so that patchwork of lies, if we set it spinning upon the wheel of history, would prove to be no colour at all, but just the colourless light of truth! D'you see the idea? Truth is built up of a thousand, thousand little untruths. It sounds mad, but can you deny it? Truth is in everything and nothing. Take art? It is all pretence, unreality, fantasy, untruth in the essence. Realism isn't truth, romanticism isn't truth, rationalism isn't truth, supernaturalism isn't truth. But the illusion of truth lurks in all these things; they all shine true to somebody; they all help; and the mighty artist would get the real white light if he could mingle all these pigments, or sing the very song of truth if his fingers could reach all the strings of the harp. In philosophy there will be a new pragmatism built out of this. Once you deny truth any real existence, then any theory: that perfection is impossible because truth is impossible, vanishes. Truth is to reality exactly what alchemy was to chemistry; and when our thinkers start after reality and drop truth, we shall push on towards super-man."

"That's quibbling," said Loveday. "You know very well that people understand truth and reality as one and the same thing."

"No, truth is the opposite of falsehood," he said, "and reality is different. As for truth and falsehood, they change places endlessly while the world spins. There's no finality in either. The truth of

to-day is the falsehood of to-morrow. Truth is being bowled out every hour, every moment. It fluctuates like Consols. We believe things that our children will laugh at and our grandfathers would have scorned. The shadow that every truth flings is a falsehood. But reality — if we could reach to that —"

"So now your greatest good is reality?" asked Loveday.

"For the moment it seems a very fine thing," he declared. "But where shall we look? Is that mountain real, or the purple bloom upon it, that all men have seen but no man has ever trodden? Is that round cloud real, or the halo of light that circles it, like a diadem on an old queen's grey hair?"

So they chattered and set the world right; but under his sense and nonsense the man felt a chill heart, and he knew that her thoughts were cold also. He could not choose but know it by her bent head and listless mien, by the effort she made from time to time to utter coherent comments on the things that he said; by her silences and by her sighs. Yet the tumult of her mind he little guessed. There at least homed a reality — a resolve, a fierce, almost savage determination on Loveday's part to do a deed of note.

They strolled by easy stages through great woods, and they marked the scenes of their other pilgrimages spread round about them. Then, after a long silence, suddenly she spoke. Her voice throbbed and her words stuck together. She stopped, panted, and began again.

"It sounds so strange and yet it's real enough,

and I mean it with every spark of strength in my body. And it's right and fair — right and fair — and I should live miserable and die miserable if I didn't mean it. Who am I to say 'nay' to you — you, who have been so good to me and helped me to live? I feel like Galatea — as if I had never felt my heart beat till I knew you and came to life. You made the best part of me — at any rate, you woke it up. I should have gone on sleeping forever but for you, and — and before I go to sleep again —. It's little enough, God knows — and if it means more than it ought to mean, and if the change of view is the result of a deeper change, and I'm growing base and wicked — I don't care. I don't care — there are far worse things than being wicked. Paint me — paint me — as you want to paint me, while I'm worth painting! Then I shall have been beautiful for something and lived for something — not for nothing, as I should live if you didn't do it. Make the best you can of me, and I wish I was ten thousand times more beautiful for your sake. You are a great artist, and your work is very precious to me, and — and — when we part I shall have something to remember; and I shall know that the little little I could do to make you happier and help you with a picture I did do — There — I mean it!"

For a few moments he said nothing, and heard her quick breathing close to him where they sat together. Then he won self-control.

"You wonderful Loveday," he said. "To think — here — now — wonderful young Loveday! And yet not so wonderful neither. Life is interesting, and it's often most interesting when it's most damnable.

Now I can look at you again. You surprised me. I often wondered what sort of things we should say to each other — at the finish. I never thought, somehow, that you'd ever say that. And yet, if I'd been half as quick as I pretend to be, I ought to have seen it in your eyes for a week."

"No," she said, "it only came to me like a flash — just after you'd been talking about reality, or something."

She was calmer again and her face at rest.

"I had to say it. It burst upon me to say it. Though it just came like a flash of lightning, it won't go — I shan't change. There's no reason why you should not paint me if you want to paint me. There was a very good reason before; but none now."

He looked into his heart and read hers. Then the tremendous matter within himself made him unsteady. He panted to take her into his arms; but while the wrong and the folly of making her love him had never struck him, and the futility of loving her had also never struck him, yet in reality, having regard for his own code as a man of honour, the past was unutterably futile — a mere fool's paradise entered open-eyed by one who knew that it was a fool's paradise. He had deliberately begun to love her with the whole strength of his nature, though common sense had been calling again and again to him to fly. He knew that she was not for him, and yet he had gone on; he knew that his own code would never let honour be well lost if only he could win her; yet he had gone on. And now came the truth crashing in upon him from her. She loved him, too. Here was reality and the need for an instant sequel.

"This is the greatest thing that has ever happened on this mountain," he said. "And it means — oh, so much, much more than you think it means. I am overwhelmed. I have such a lot to say that I think I'll say nothing. That's a novelty for you. But — but — now — it's a subtle tangle — I don't think I can unravel it in a moment. Leave it for a little while. I'll think to-night. You've cornered me, and I've cornered you, and — yes — leave it. For the minute nothing but 'Thank you,' thank you ten thousand times for being — just your wonderful, strange, subtle self. It is glorious of you."

She grew hot again and suffered as she had never suffered before. She knew that her offer was not going to be accepted now. But she did not know why.

"God forgive me — I'm a mad fool — I don't know how mad. I must go home to sane people. I — I —"

She leapt up.

"I can't sit still. I want to jump over a cliff or something. What have you done? What have you done? I offer, and you — you don't want me now. How brutal of you — just to say in your heart, 'I'll make her offer, and then I'll refuse.' No man would have done that. I hate you for it!"

"You know that I couldn't do any such thing," he said calmly. "I haven't refused your glorious offer. It was unutterably beautiful of you — brave and beautiful, and more wonderful every time I think of it. Looking back I have felt almost dazed sometimes that I could ever ask you; but that was before — I'll explain presently. I must explain — I know that. I'm a weak, wicked fool. I'm not

worthy of a friend like you. Things happen so fast — in your sleep, I believe — and you wake up and find — I'll write to you, Loveday. It's fearfully difficult, and I deserve it. But you don't — you don't deserve to have one moment's suffering or trouble. And don't hate me till you hear just how it is. If you hate me after you've heard — then I shall know where I am; but bottle it up till afterwards. Don't go and waste a lot of fine, fiery hate till you know if you mean it. Come on — let's rattle down the hill. You shall have my letter to-night — to sleep on. It won't keep you awake, I promise.''

Something knit into his words calmed the woman. Not the words but the pauses, the tones, and a look in his eyes when he lifted them to her eyes again, comforted her. Yet she felt there was no comfort underneath, for she knew him.

CHAPTER XXXVII

BERTRAM TO LOVEDAY

"DEAR LOVEDAY,—

"It is only the things that are won, or lost, by fighting that we can make terms about — not the things given or taken by love. I fought to win you for my 'Venus'— and I lost. Then you gave all that I had fought for — but I lost again. Of course, there could only be one reason: I could only beg for that while I didn't love; and you could only give it when you did. Perhaps that is all the difference between a man and a woman. Now I do love, and so I cannot; and you love, and so you can!

"Of course, the most blessed luck that can happen to a man and woman, who make things, is to come together. They see life and its values with the same eyes; they know what matters and what does not; they have their own standards and their own contempts; they brace each other to the difficult task of living, and at the same time share the privilege of being alive. They are always showing each other good things, and making each new day a wonder and each new place a wonderland. They heighten each other's seeing and sharpen each other's taste; and sometimes the man remembers his chum is a woman, and presses her to his heart, to give and get a strength and spark that only artist lovers know. Of all steep

ways in life, that is the way where a man and woman can help each other most vitally. And I have glimpsed it. I have looked through the gate of Paradise. There was a great and glorious thing; and though to enter is impossible, to have seen and known what the joy of life might be is something.

"I am richer a millionfold for having known you, and I shall love you to my dying day. I am thankful that you crossed my path; and though a rather wise person once said that we cannot sympathise with those happier than ourselves, or share their joy — judging others by himself, no doubt — he is wrong. I can, for one, and I do — and I shall be as joyful as a cherub at the Throne when I hear that all is well with you.

"Thank the gods, there's no humbug about us. We shan't regard Destiny as Manfred did, and think its every footstep a man's grave; we shan't even call its footsteps the graves of hope or happiness.

"We've bucked each other up terrifically, and must go on doing so.

"I'll send you 'Madonna of the Fire-flies' when I get back to Florence, and you can send me a poem.

"We must exchange like that sometimes. I shall be off before you read this. In fact, after I say good-night, I shall make my journey.

"Write to me when you get home, and tell me that everything is all right.

"Your friend,

"BERTRAM."

Loveday read her letter after midnight, and looked out of her window onto the Lake. The air had grown

weary and had laid itself down to rest. A heavy vapour hid all form, and left the mountains no more than amorphous smudges heaved against the night. But over them the sky domed clear, and Jupiter swung there under the moon. Here pale cloud cirri swam and spread their shoals of brightness; but the moon rose clear of them and her light, raining in a grey pool upon the lake, spread thence and waxed and broadened until it broke in great patines of silver upon the shore. It seemed that the water's heart was beating with gentle systole and diastole, and there was no darkness on land or lake; for the veil of light, that only sparkled and broke into moon-flashes along the path thrown down from on high, spread evenly to irradiate all things. Earth merged under it and was rendered transparent by the nocturnal sleight that makes shadow solid and matter a shadow. But along the confines of Como glittered earth-born fires — points of bright gold in the dim dream-light of the moon.

Great silence held the time; then the bells of Varenna beat the hour drowsily, and their music stole by its own still way over the water to Loveday, where she looked out upon the night with her letter in her hand.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

LOVEDAY TO BERTRAM

"HOME.

"DEAR BERTRAM,—

"Two days after your return to Firenze I was home again. There were no flags hung out to meet me, and I did not hear any band at the station. I am inconceivably troubled, and so is Ralegh Vane, and so is Lady Vane, and so is Nina Spedding.

"All these poor people are waiting for me to end or mend their tribulations. They regard me as the Scandinavians regarded their gods — hated them, yet cringed to their power — propitiated them openly, but rejoiced in secret that their twilight was coming, when they would suffer as they had made men and women suffer.

"I don't know what I'm saying exactly; I only know that the future is amazingly difficult for the moment. And yet something must happen swiftly. The return of the native has precipitated a certain solution. *Things have happened to Ralegh as well as to me.* But he's so unreal, and honourable, and chivalrous, and silly. He tells me fibs with his mouth and the truth with his eyes.

"For God's sake, answer this as quickly as you can, and tell me where you are, and what you are thinking about.

"This place seems like the dream of a dream now — a mere washed-out shadow of reality — no life, no warmth, no colour on the earth, no sun in the sky — nothing but bleak rain on bleak, black-green trees. And the people are all bleak and earth-coloured and resigned and limp and antediluvian and ghostly. And my heart's trying to break.

"Here's a rhyme, but I don't want the picture. Do you remember the journey over the hills by night from Firenze to Milan, on the way to Como? You left us to smoke, and Stella and Annette arranged their little pillows and slept; and Stella snored; and I wrote this.

"LOVEDAY.

"P. S.— Nina and Ralegh were made for each other from the beginning of time, and why in the name of everything that is sane and rational don't they tell me so — instead of forcing me to tell them? You have shown me what it is to be hard and pagan and clean. But all the nice people in England are soft and Christian and sticky."

AN APENNINE NIGHT.

Like to a yellow rose the drooping moon
Bowed down and withered till her earth-born light
Died on the dusky mountains; all the boon
Of dreaming silver that a suppliant night
Had won from Heaven was gone, and now the dome
Of every hill, the darkling slopes of vine,
Glimmering ghostly, and each silent home
Of sleeping man awaited the chill sign
That night was done. But yet her ancient lease
Held over earth even unto the hills,
Whose scented forest wings upon the peace
Of the deep, starry sky were pluming. Rills

Threw out their loops of foam, that turned and glanced
Where, underneath linked arms of forest trees,
There sparkled lamps, as though the fairies danced
To magic music. Such festivities
The frolic fire-flies used in nightly glades
When their brief, winking trails of light were shown
Environing with golden-green the shades
Where sang a nightingale upon his throne
Of myrtle. While the bird deliciously
Set silence tingling till the very leaves
Kissed one another in an ecstasy,
The living light dripped through their dewy sheaves
And came and went and came and went as when
Small stars peep out from rack of cloudy sky
Twinkling and vanishing. But quickly then,
Elves of the Apennine, your hour slipt by,
And one by one your tiny tapers died;
Ye hid yourselves from the prophetic east
Where, through the purple now there stole and sighed
A whisper and a tremor. The bird ceased
His love-song sweet; the firmament grew pale —
Pale as old ivory; but soon its face
Was blushing, and each far-flung ridge and dale,
Hill and lush valley, drank the dawn apace.
Light sped on roseal wings where rivers flow,
To set their wrinkled shallows all afire
With amber flame; from heaven's golden bow
Sped arrows into heaven, higher and higher,
Until the aged mountains met young day.
To each upsoaring crown and verdant head,
Where rolled the green, green forest's panoply
He leapt; and earth was glad to feel his tread.

CHAPTER XXXIX

BERTRAM TO LOVEDAY

"MONTE GENEROSA, LUGANO.

"DEAR LOVEDAY,—

"Hastings Forbes has become an agnostic, and his wife has gone to Milan for a week to hear a new opera. Fordyce — you remember him at the Mackinders — was good enough to take her. Probably Forbes would have done better to stick to Marcus Aurelius. He's not a freethinker really — merely a non-thinker. He's discovered Rationalism, as a boy discovers a bird's-nest, and is running about shouting Huxley and Spencer. Wasn't it little Jack Horner who pulled a plum out of the pie and thought himself clever? I think, in his poor futile mind, Forbes imagines that Rationalism condones the lady, and justifies his conduct before the world. There are fools who seem to fancy it gives them leave to be loose; whereas in truth there's nothing stricter than Rationalism. Philosophy isn't an everlasting compensation, as one finds very easily just now.

"I've fled Firenze, and come up here to breathe clean air and get face to face with reality. There is a variety of people stopping here, and for the most part they are intelligent lovers of art. It's strange what a steadfast touchstone she is: to Germans and Frenchmen, the bread of life — food; to Italians, the

wine of life — stimulant; to English — what? A coarse narcotic to help kill their time — painlessly. They neither ask nor want more from it than a mean distraction. Foggazaro used to work near here, and the ground he trod is hallowed to an Italian. Ground in England is merely marketable or worthless — never holy — whoever has trodden it.

" Don't laugh — I'm ill. Nerves all over the shop; conceit gone, vanity gone, unsufferable power of self-assertion gone, belief in myself gone, inspiration gone. You naturally ask what is left? There was nothing until I got your letter and ' The Apennine Night.' I showed the poem to an Englishman up here, who understands the technique of poetry, and he said it was jolly promising for a young thing. To me it is a glimpse of you.

" Write and tell me if the sun begins to warm you again and the mud-coloured people grow less ghostly.

" You don't mention my only friend in the West Country. I refer to Fry.

" Well, of course, I'm tragically interested in all you tell me. Your letter is merely an instalment of a tremendous story. It seems that Sir Ralegh can say ' Nor have I been idle during your absence, my lady! '

" So it's ' up to him ' now — a sweet American expression meaning that it is his turn to play.

" There's a man here — an architect — sane excepting when the wind's south. Then he believes that the decorations of heaven will be English Gothic!

" I'm at a low ebb, and can't work. All sense wants continued stimulating, you see. Take ' touch.'

You hold a woman's hand in yours — hold it passively, and sense will quickly cease, so that you might as well be holding a piece of wood. Not till you squeeze the hand and so set your nerves acting again are you conscious of what you hold. And feeling wants stimulating, too. My ears throb awfully for the sound of your voice. They are the hungriest part of me, for your face I know better than my own; but your voice I ache to hear. I shall grow deaf for want of it presently.

"'With the breath of the four seasons in one's breast, one will be able to create on paper.' That was written by a Chinaman in 1680. Perhaps it's true; but you must know what you are breathing, and you must also happen to be an artist. D'you think conscious existence is really possible without the creative instinct? Mine is dead, anyway, and I feel ever so much smaller in body and in mind. I was wondering what had gone, and I found that everything was lost excepting hope. And much that's worthless you've helped me to lose forever, thank the gods. But all the really live part of me — all that matters — is wrapped up in a parcel and in your charge.

"If you can't bring it back, at any rate don't lose it. But — can you bring it back? You see that this is all an answer to your letter.

"I understand most perfectly and thoroughly what you have gone through and what you have had to pay for escaping your original environment and coming out here. And now it remains to be seen whether the game was worth the candle.

"What is it that makes the English so sentimen-

tal and so infernally business-like and sordid all in a breath? The same man will blow his nose over some stupid, sentimental play, and, next morning, jew his brother and devour widows' houses. The English are soft and hard in streaks — as chalk and flint happen together.

"Of course, your postscript is terrific. I suppose I may repeat it: that Sir Ralegh has found a woman better suited to him than the new Loveday Merton, but is so cowed by the old values that he cannot, for his high, fine honour, say so.

"Your letter has a great 'curtain,' as the theatrical people say. Where does the next act take place? And, above all, who will play in it? If I knew — Oh, I want to say ten thousand things, but cannot till Vane has spoken. Shall I come and see him?

"BERTRAM.

"One sees the whole world from up here — including Como and the familiar climbs. I looked across at Grigna yesterday, and thought of the mule and his steel shoes."

CHAPTER XL

THE IMMENSITIES

MARGUERITE HETICH declared afterwards that she had never spent such a day before, and never wanted to spend such another.

"At nine o'clock," wrote Marguerite to a friend in Switzerland, "we reached Baveno — after a night without sleep, because Mademoiselle would talk. Then we took a steamer across Lago Maggiore to Luino; and then a little train to Ponte Tresa; and then a steamer to Melide, on Lago Lugano; and then another steamer to Capolago; and then a little train, that climbed like a squirrel up and up and up to Monte Generoso, in the clouds. Then a little tram pulled by a horse through a wood; and then we were there. I was dead; Mademoiselle woke up and began to live. He was out somewhere on the mountain, so off she went without a cup of tea, and presently, when she had been gone an hour, it grew very dark, and the black clouds pressed their faces up to the hotel, and the thunder shouted and the lightning flashed. Of course, I wanted to rush out and find her; but where?"

In truth, Marguerite might have been forgiven for faint-heartedness.

Loveday, on reaching her destination, had learned that Bertram was away painting upon the mountains.

She set out, therefore, instantly to seek him, and trusted chance to bring them together.

The storm broke upon her high on the hills beyond shelter; and it swept her, soaked her, and bewildered her. The lightning seemed to tear at the roots of the precipices beside her, and the thunder shook them. She cowered like a bird under a hawk, then rose and turned to get back. The storm stalked away northward, and the sun shone again. Now, quite lost, she roamed on where woods spread under the crest of the hill, and then, at the edge of larch and birch that hung steeply upon the mountain, in a little grassy clearing, she found Dangerfield. Purple gentian and orange arnica blossomed at his feet, and behind him white buttercups starred the gloom of the thicket.

He was painting flowers — great pink peonies with breaking buds, and one open chalice of bright rose in which the gold of its own stamens were drowned with the silver of the rain.

He had sheltered under the wood and so escaped the storm; he rose, stared at her, doubted his senses, and then grew unsteady and set his back against a tree.

She came and put her hand into his. They were both haggard and wild-eyed; but contact sent a spark of strength through the man and flushed the girl's cheek.

For a moment they were silent.

"I've come to you," she said. "It's all over. I had to do everything myself. There's only one difference between Ralegh and me: he thought he had committed some sort of sin in finding that he loved

Nina better than he loved me; I never thought I had sinned when I found — what I found."

Dangerfield was much more moved than she.

"Fry stood out for me. Your aunt declared that I had gone to Italy a pleasant girl and come back an impossible woman."

Still he was dumb.

"Did you know I should come to you?"

"I prayed Pan that you might want me to come to you. But I didn't know. I've been in hell a long time."

"They said at Firenze you had no soul, Bertram. But it's looking out of your eyes now."

"You only see the reflection of your own," he answered.

"I will find yours for you. Love has found many a hiding soul and brought it to light. And yours is so young still."

He kissed her hand but answered nothing, and stared like a child at her. She began dimly to guess the size of his experience.

"If you knew what a stupid wretch you've come back to —" he murmured presently. "Love throws such a pitiless light on oneself. The real thing is an awful thing."

"Yes — like these precipices; but they build up the mountains. It's worth all the rest of life put together to feel what we feel now."

"Most of the people who think they love have only seen love's shadow on the grass," he said.

They held each other's hands and looked at the world.

The distance of snow and cloud was so inter-

wreathed that only by their forms, now fleeced and rounded, now jagged and clean-cut, might one separate earth from air. Shadow and sunshine homed on each alike, and clouds and snow flung one huge girdle from south to north — a diadem whose jewels were Monte Rosa and the Mischabel, the Breithorn and Jungfrau. Already roses of evening began to bud among the glaciers' dim green eyes; but from Italy might only be marked a brightness of clear sky above that wreath of mountain and cloud — a brightness that descended and penetrated the vapour and shone lustrous azure through its tatters. The blue was barred and broken at the zenith by leagues of cloud, white and level; while in lower currents of air, yet high above the earth, there rolled more clouds, that mimicked on a mighty scale the mountains beneath them. The rolling hills of the middle distance were green and blue, and amid their folds glittered Maggiore and Lugano, with many a flash and twinkle of lesser lakes, like precious stones suspended from the jewel of the great waters. So mighty was the scene, so immense the heavens and far-flung the earth, that every mood of air, from storm to sunshine, from darkness to light, from fierce movement to dreaming peace, was presented upon it.

Here burnt the setting sun over green hills and blue waters, where the little ships, shrunk to waterflies, oared over the sapphire; here, like a flock of birds, grey cloudlets circled the crags and precipices, thrust out from the mountain and swam away upon the air; here a great rainbow light, tangled in delicate, aërial architecture of fire and vapour, swept over the western heaven; and here the thunderstorm that had just

broken, winged to the San Gotthard and retreated — a huge, cowled shape of darkness, under the diamond-bright arches of the lightning.

To see the way that worlds are built one must climb as high as this; but Bertram and young Loveday now looked back from earth into the mightier worlds of their own eyes.

"Twin stars forever and ever and ever!" he said.

"The sun and a little moon," she answered.

They kissed each other, and the kiss was as long as the whole life of many creatures that live on earth.

THE END

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